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## Are the Mbororo'en Boring, and Are the Fulbe Finished?

CHARLES FRANTZ

### Abstract

The identification and portraiture of populations as Fulbe (Fulani, Peul) has varied, both historically and currently, with time and ecological location, as well as with the interests and knowledge of the conceptualizer or researcher. This paper examines the changes among Fulbe groups in terms of their numbers and the size of their herds, the degree of dependence upon rearing livestock, their geographical locations and permanence of settlement, and their political dominance, religious affiliation, occupational structure, use of Fulfulde, endogamous mating, and continuity of distinctive biological features.

As they have become increasingly involved in supralocal (regional, national, and international) systems of behavior, the more nomadic Fulbe sections (Mbororo'en) are declining in number and are being given less attention by other Africans, governmental officials, and outside scholars. At the same time, an increasing number of sedentary Fulbe are acculturating to Muslim/North African forms of social organization and culture, and to a lesser degree to forms which derive from Western Europe. In sum, changing and variable situational criteria continue to be used in discerning and describing Fulbe populations.

### Introduction

A concern with "Fulbe" and "Fulbeness" is representative of the pervasive problems of science and the humanities about the conceptualization of analytic units.<sup>1)</sup> Scholars commonly do research, however, with different assumptions about "reality." One pair of divergent approaches goes by the names of "realism" and "nominalism." Realists assume that units or objects exist "concretely," and that they may be perceived and analyzed by human observers. Nominalists, on the other hand, assume that groups and other analytic units are fictitious, and therefore the critical evidence of their existence lies in the minds either of the observer or the observed, or both.

We thus face two interrelated problems: firstly, scholars either have to *discover* empirically or to *create* intentionally those behaviors or units which are to be analyzed by such terms as family, *lenyol*, patronage, *maccube*, kingship, and *pulaaku*.

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1) This concern of mine was first examined in an unpublished paper (1971).

Among the more difficult units to discover and/or conceptualize are ethnic groups, communities, societies, languages, races, modes of production, and cultures. Secondly, social analysts inescapably have to deal with both instability/discontinuity and stability/continuity in the behavior or units they study. The search for distinctive behaviors which can most appropriately be labelled "Fulbe" is similar to the problem of how proper or best it is to identify the descendents of people from India now living in Guiana, Fiji, and Kenya; or, whether and how one should label or categorize immigrants from Japan who have settled in Brazil, the U.S.A., and Korea.

In this paper I will first make a few general comments with respect to the concepts of ethnicity, ethnic identity, Fulbe (Fulani, Peul), Mbororo'en (Bororo), and pastoralism. I will then look at some demographic estimates of "Fulbe" populations, and briefly discuss their present and shifting locations today. I will next focus on their political-economic position in various nations. Since no Fulbe population is an actual isolate, and since all of them have long been intertwined with non-Fulbe in wider economic, political, and religious systems—during pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial times—Fulbe behavior should be examined within the context of more encompassing inter-ethnic and international systems.

To conclude my paper, I will summarize the data about the kinds and degrees of social and cultural features which various Fulbe groups share. Finally, I will speculate on whether the Mbororo'en have become or will become "boring," i.e., uninteresting to study; and, furthermore, whether the Fulbe are becoming finished, or approaching the end of their existence, as one or more distinctive ethnic groups.

### **Ethnicity: Cognitive, Emotional, and Social**

Fulfulde-speaking communities or groups, as with others known by different labels, vary greatly in important characteristics, such as: whether they speak Fulfulde as their first and/or only language; are nomadic or sedentary; are urban or rural; gain the livelihood principally by rearing livestock or crops (or both together), or through non-agricultural occupations; are politically dominant over other ethnic groups; are hierarchical/stratified or egalitarian/unstratified; depend on ex-slaves, ex-serfs, and on non-Fulbe individuals for labor; are guided mainly by Islam with respect to marriage and inheritance; and differ biologically, both genetically and in outward appearance, from neighboring communities.<sup>2)</sup>

Ethnicity and ethnic identity seem to exist *both* nominally and realistically, i.e., in both the minds and social relations of a finite number of people who *assign themselves* a name (or more than one name), as well as in the minds of *outsiders* or non-members, whether they be scholars or ordinary citizens. This dual basis for the origination and the continuation of ethnicity—both in motor behavior and in

2) This is a rephrasing of Frantz (1981a: 89). See also Williams (1988) with respect to changing European uses of "racial" criteria in defining or demarcating Fulbe from non-Fulbe populations.

mental thought—makes it difficult if not impossible to find or demarcate “concrete” or clearly isolable units. Barth<sup>3)</sup> conceived of an ethnic group as being “real,” rather highly integrated, and clearly demarcated from other ethnic groups. Many subsequent analysts,<sup>4)</sup> however, believe that in most culturally heterogeneous societies, ethnicity is essentially *situational*, that is, it varies both in time and space.

Some years ago, Geertz<sup>5)</sup> spoke of the importance for ethnic identity of what he called “primordial sentiments” among social groups, and he named six of these: assumed blood ties, race, language, region, religion, and custom. In a study of the Hausa-Fulani city of Kano, Nigeria, Paden lists eight categories of ethnic identification; and in a similar study of Sokoto, Hendrixson identifies twenty criteria by which the residents define themselves and others.<sup>6)</sup> By contrast, Burnham<sup>7)</sup> says that aspirants to membership in Fulbe groups in Meiganga, Cameroon, only have to undergo three behavioral changes: learn Fulfulde, become Muslim, and accept Fulbe ideals and lifestyles. Schultz,<sup>8)</sup> arguing rather similarly with respect to Guidar, Cameroon, indicates that there are two main keys to a non-Fulbe becoming Fulbe: living in town, and learning Fulbe language and culture. In both places, “Fulbeness” depends neither upon raising livestock nor upon maintaining a set of critical biophysical features which distinguish Fulbe from non-Fulbe. On the contrary, by virtue of increasing sedentarization and wealth among Fulbe in towns, their wives generally have been freed from farm work. Instead, farming tasks are done by employees or concubines, and in turn these groups may become incorporated through the Fulbe patricentric system; in such case, both these categories of (presumably non-Fulbe) individuals are gradually Fulbeized and Islamized. Furthermore, the offspring of a Fulbe father and his concubine enjoy the same jural rights as do the children of the same man and his Koran-sanctioned spouses.

Let us ask now whether it is useful to assert that all across Africa there is one group of people/nation/ethnos who can properly be called “Fulbe.” If so, what are the criteria which demarcate Fulbe from non-Fulbe in (a) *all* cases/situations, or in (b) *particular* or *comparable* situations? Are “Fulbe” to be identified with those who now are and/or in the past were primarily dependent upon raising livestock? If so, did or does this depend upon having a single species (cattle) or a mixture of species in their herds? Do “Fulbe” populations nutritionally depend in equal measure on the resources provided by their animals? And are their spatial movements (“nomadic” or “transhumant”) basically the same, and indeed does pastoralism need to be associated with nomadism?

Writers who use either nominalist or realist assumptions have generally

3) Barth (1969).

4) E.g., Salamone (1975), Cohen (1978), Paden (1970, 1973), Hendrixson (1980), and Frantz (1981a : 111).

5) Geertz (1963 : 112–113).

6) Paden (1970: 259 ff., 1973 : 36–38), and Hendrixson (1980 : 53–54).

7) Burnham (1972 : 312).

8) Schultz (1984 : 50).

characterized "Fulbe" as being "pastoral nomads" during most of their history. Some scholars<sup>9)</sup> have recently advocated dropping the use of this term, however, since it is not a "natural" [read "real"] category. Also, by invoking geographical mobility in the definition, it diverts attention from whether animal production is mainly conducted for subsistence purposes or, contrarily, for generating surplus livestock that can be exchanged for other goods. Bourgeot<sup>10)</sup> has suggested, with reference to the Tuareg, that there are three types of nomadism: nutritional (subsistence herding), caravan (long-distance trading), and predatory (raiding and conquering). His scheme might be improved, I think, if pastoralism and nomadism are disaggregated. Hence a better way to examine pastoral activities by both nomadic and sedentary groups might be to focus on three variables:

a. The extent to which nomadic/seasonal movement is necessary in order to attain production goals;

b. Whether animals and animal products are consumed or used mainly within, rather than outside, the social units which produce them [Fulbe much differ in this respect from many East African and Asian pastoral societies]; and

c. The chief uses of the animals: a list of possibilities would primarily include nutrition (milk, meat, and blood), but it would also give attention to using animals for transportation and to pull plows and water wheels, to pay or evade paying taxes, to settle disputes, to clear fields of crop residues, to exchange for grain, money or consumer goods, to fertilize fields, to alert herds to dangers from human raiders or animal predators, and as gifts, loans, symbols of status and wealth, and so on.

Having argued that the concrete reality of ethnic groups, including the "Fulbe," and of a distinct way of life called "pastoral nomadism" are only approximations to "reality," let us—by overlooking some problematics—now discuss the number and location of "Fulbe" communities in Africa today.

### Numbers of Fulbe

The size of any population is always the outcome of interaction between biological and non-biological factors, some of which will be discussed below. There has never been an accurate tabulation of "Fulbe" in Africa, either recently or at any time in the past. It seems reasonable to assume that over the centuries "Fulbe" have increased in number, as have most ethnic groups in the continent. In realistic terms, the quality and quantity of censuses made by African governments diverge widely. Also, the nominal definitions of "Fulbe" vary both by (a) governments and by (b) individuals who themselves are either Fulbe or non-Fulbe. In 1959, Stenning<sup>11)</sup> estimated there were 6,000,000 Fulbe. In 1977, Riesman<sup>12)</sup> said

9) Asad (1979), and Dyson-Hudson and Dyson-Hudson (1980).

10) Bourgeot (1975).

11) Stenning (1959 : 1).

12) Riesman (1984 : 173).

that some 9,000,000 lived in territory between the Atlantic Ocean and Cameroon. In a book published the following year, Weekes<sup>13</sup> and Hopen<sup>14</sup> give figures of 12,000,000 and 19–20,000,000 Fulbe living in West Africa. Estimates of the number of Fulbe who reside in nations east of Cameroon are either unavailable or less reliable.<sup>15</sup>

Looking first at some biological factors which influence the size of a population, scattered demographic surveys suggest that both migratory and sedentary Fulbe have smaller rates of natural increase than do horticultural ethnic groups. In addition, among persons descended from former slaves and serf castes in various Fulbe areas, birth rates are lower due to a high incidence of venereal disease.<sup>16</sup>

At various times, Fulbe populations have declined as the result of famines and diseases, both human and non-human. In the last two decades, unknown numbers of livestock (probably hundreds of thousands, and possibly millions) and people (perhaps tens of thousands) have encountered death as the result of extensive droughts.<sup>17</sup> How many of these were Fulbe, as well as how many were either pastoralists or non-pastoralists, are next to impossible to document. Part of this difficulty reflects the fact that many pastoralists—whether Fulbe or not—either temporarily or permanently shifted into agricultural or urban occupations and settlements. In more “normal” periods, varying numbers of Fulbe have “disappeared” through voluntary or involuntary acculturation, assimilation, and incorporation into other ethnic groups. Probably this occurred most frequently within the area of the former Sokoto emirate, where Hausa social and cultural norms were dominant.

In addition, the Republic of the Sudan has received a large number of Fulbe immigrants (and, more broadly, “Fellata”) during the last two centuries. The reasons for this are mostly non-biological, and they include making a pilgrimage to Mecca, poverty, heavy taxation, military defeat, and religious zealotry (e.g., Mahdism).<sup>18</sup> By the end of the 19th century, most Fulbe who had migrated to the Sennar area had been absorbed into Sudan Arabic society,<sup>19</sup> whereas others moving into the Baggara Arab region were assimilated within two generations’ time.<sup>20</sup>

Situations in which the number of Fulbe has decreased, however, seems to be less frequent than the contrary. Rather consistent evidence seems to exist that their

13) Weekes (1978 : 499–527).

14) Hopen (1978 : 134).

15) However, see Balamoan (1981) on the “Fellata” in the Republic of the Sudan.

16) Cantrelle and Dupire (1964), Gallais (1972 : 306–308), Bernus (1975 : 69), Caldwell (1975), Hurault (1969–70), Swift (1977 : 465–470), Scott (1979), and Hill (1985).

17) See Caldwell (1975), Berg (1975), Gallais (1972), Dalby *et al.* (1977), Bernus (1975), Swift (1977), Marnham (1977), and Watts (1983b, 1987).

18) Al-Naqr (1972), Hino (1986), Works (1976), Duffield (1981), Frantz (1983), Balamoan (1981), and Birks (1978).

19) Duffield (1981 : 16–18, 25 f., 37, 142–144); cf. Hino (1986 : 96).

20) Adams (1982 : 269–270).

numbers are increasing, perhaps not among migratory pastoralists but certainly among sedentary Fulbe. Several large and successful Fulbe military conquests in the western Sudanic zone resulted in major increases in the number of non-Fulbe whose daily lives became intimately bound up with those of their conquerors. Hundreds of thousands of the former were captured by the latter, and often compulsorily settled into Fulbe-regulated farms or villages. Through slavery, serfdom and clientage, the Fulbe overlords had a greatly enlarged source of wives, concubines, and farming, herding, domestic, and military labor. Sometimes the numbers of non-Fulbe who were economically (and, increasingly, socially and politically) incorporated into Fulbe communities were so great that they outnumbered their Fulbe conquerors.<sup>21)</sup>

Differential power, often combined with the control of long-distance trading, greater Koranic learning, and more wealth gave the Fulbe a status that many non-Fulbe emulated, both voluntarily and involuntarily.<sup>22)</sup> Despite the Fulbe being conquered by European nations, significant numbers of non-Fulbe continue in many areas to become "Fulbeized"—that is, to acculturate to Fulbe ways of living—principally through the following means:

- a. As a wife or concubine to a Pullo;
- b. As a child of this couple;
- c. As a domestic servant, especially in a Pullo's home, but also as a herdsman, carpenter, or gardener;
- d. As an assistant or aide to a Pullo who holds a particular office or status;
- e. As a musician, healer, teacher, student, prostitute, or another occupational specialist associated with a Pullo household or palace;
- f. As an adoptee (e.g., orphan or twin-born) from another ethnic group; or
- g. As an owner or herder of non-Fulbe livestock, which brings interaction with Fulbe in domestic activities.<sup>23)</sup>

Not only were non-Fulbe commoners assimilated, acculturated, and often incorporated into Fulbe populations. Many chiefs and headmen of ethnic groups conquered by the Fulbe (or, later, administered by Fulbe officials in regions where the Fulbe were once politically dominant) also adopted various components of Fulbe culture, and converted to Islam, in order to retain or regain their previous authority or status.<sup>24)</sup>

21) See Gallais (1967, 1975), Diarra (1975), Dupire (1962), Frantz (1975, 1978, 1980, 1981a), Froelich (1954), Stenning (1959), and Hopen (1958).

22) Smith (1954, 1959), Last (1967), Baier and Lovejoy (1977), Hill (1976, 1985), Collard (1980), Bovin (1985), Schultz (1980), Burnham (1980a), Podlewski (1966), Hurault (1969–70), Baldus (1974, 1977), Braukämper (1970), Rivière (1974, 1977), and Froelich (1954).

23) See Frantz (1978, 1980, 1981a), Eguchi (1974), Schultz (1984), Blench (1984), Adegboye *et al.* (1978), Oyedipe (1983), Burnham (1972, 1979), Abubakar (1977), and Njeuma (1978).

24) Hurault (1969–70), Burnham (1980a), Hino (1984: 177), Last (1967), Smith (1954, 1959), Paden (1970), Azarya (1978), and Frantz (1981a). See also note 43, *infra*.

### Location of Fulbe

From their putative tenth-century homeland in Senegambia, Fulfulde-speaking communities have now spread into some twenty nations. With the possible exception of Liberia, these include all nations from Mauretania and Senegal to the Republic of Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya.<sup>25</sup> Living in small groups at least part of the year, their locations were (and still are) dependent upon the interaction of two sets of factors: natural (grass, water, salt/natron, diseases, etc.) and social (taxes, veterinary services, market locations, kin and ceremonial ties, government courts, relations with other ethnic groups, and so on). Different Fulbe populations have lived in highly homogeneous communities and regions or, alternatively, interstitially with members of other ethnic groups, especially in pastoral regions. Today, an increasing percentage of Fulbe are becoming settled and urbanized, including a growing proportion of Mbororo'en who live near cities and towns in order to help fill the rising demand for milk and meat.

The main historic movement of Fulbe has been eastward,<sup>26</sup> and this still continues, probably to a greater extent than do movements in other directions. However, during the last three decades quite a few Fulbe pastoralists have moved northward into traditional Tuareg and Moor territories;<sup>27</sup> and, increasingly, they have gone southward into the Guinea forest ecozone.<sup>28</sup> There has also been an essentially non-directional movement of Fulbe (as well as non-Fulbe) from rural to urban areas, or to refugee camps, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s as the result of serious and extended droughts.<sup>29</sup> As range conditions have improved in various locations, however, some Fulbe whose herds were not depleted have returned to pastoral activities. Overall, however, there are insufficient data to enable identification of all the areas and extent to which Fulbe have been sedentarized, either

25) Anon. (1979: 1459).

26) See notes 18, 19, and 20, *supra*, and also Kirk-Greene (1958), Braukämper (1970), Boutrais (1974a, 1974b, 1978a, 1986, 1988), and Frantz (1975).

27) Diarra (1975), Franke and Chasin (1980: 27), Jackou (n.d.), Bernus (1975), White (1984), Maliki (1981, 1982), Gallais (1972), Caldwell (1975), Lovejoy and Baier (1975), Swift (1977), Last (1967), Dupire (1962, 1972), Berg (1975), and Bonfiglioli (1988). Adamu and Kirk-Greene (1986) say that Fulbe, Tuareg, and Hausa have been cohabiting the central Sudanic region for the last four centuries.

28) Fricke (1976, 1979), Blench (1984, 1985), Boutrais (1974a, 1978a, 1986), Gallais (1972, 1976), Lovejoy and Baier (1975), Swift (1977), Barral (1967), Oyedipe (1983), Ford (1975), Mortimore (1973), Berg (1975), Caldwell (1975), Stenning (1957), Baldus (1974), Morgan (1959), Hill (1970), Hickey (1978, 1980), Awogbade (1982, 1983, 1986), Leis (1970), Froelich (1954), Laya (1975), Horowitz (1976), Delgado (1977), Greene (1975), Prothero (1962), Hurault (1964, 1969-70), Toupet (1977), Frantz (1975, 1978), Dupire (1962), and Waters-Bayer (1985).

29) Lovejoy and Baier (1975), Beauvilan (1977), Laya (1975), Toupet (1977), Glantz (1976), Swift (1977), Greene (1975), Bernus (1977), Meillassoux (1974), Dalby *et al.* (1977), Copans (1975), Marnham (1977), and Caldwell (1975).



voluntarily or involuntarily.

Several features of this dynamic locational pattern of Fulbe may be noted: first, Fulbe now reside in notably more extensive parts of Africa than ever before. Secondly, for the first time, many pastoral Fulbe communities are competing for access to basic resources, either with (a) other livestock-rearing societies, e.g., Tuareg, Moor, or Arab, or with (b) members of horticultural societies who have begun to raise livestock and/or expand cultivation into lands previously used only for grazing. Thirdly, they are progressively becoming sedentary, and thus interact in new and different ways with individuals who have different ethnic identities, languages, etc.; also, this has often generated more inter-ethnic friction than previously. Fourthly, this residential stabilization has been accompanied by increased agricultural activity, thus making it less necessary for Fulbe to exchange animal products directly for grain and household goods produced by farming communities. Fifthly, Fulbe occupational skills have also diversified with sedentarization, and this has brought increased competition with individuals of other ethnic groups.

### Political-Economic Relations

Within the twenty nations where Fulfulde-speaking communities reside, they vary considerably in the power and influence they possess, both at local and national levels. Several key factors seem to explain this diversity: one obviously is the percentage of a nation's population which is composed of people called "Fulbe," and another is the degree to which they are spatially dispersed or concentrated. A third important variable is whether the Fulbe, or some portion of them, at the time of European conquest were mainly mobile pastoralists living in dispersed and egalitarian households or, contrarily, were rulers/conquerors (and, hence, mostly sedentary and hierarchical). Associated with these factors was, of course, a fourth one: the extent of Fulbe political and military power.

Before losing their sovereignty to Europeans, several Fulbe states controlled what Goody<sup>30</sup> calls "the means of destruction," i.e., horses/camels, mounted soldiers, and other laborers. After conquest, large blocks of non-Fulbe who had been subservient were legally freed; and of these, many fled or abandoned their masters/owners, while others remained and in time worked out various accommodations with their Fulbe superiors. Pastoral Fulbe during and after the colonial era have generally remained politically fragmented and only loosely articulated with government. One technique widely used to incorporate them into the emergent national systems was to reorganize their leaders (*ardo'en*) on the basis of territory rather than kinship.<sup>31</sup>

30) Goody (1971); see also Smaldone (1977), Asad (1973), Hendrixson (1980), and Frantz (1981b).

31) Abubakar (1977), Burnham (1980a: 48), Kirk-Greene (1958), Schultz (1984: 48), Hickey (1978, 1980), Smith (1959), Hino (1984), Baldus (1974), Baldé (1986), and Rivière (1974, 1977).

In several colonies, however, at least the sedentary Fulbe administrators, judges, and tax-collectors continued to be recognized, although new legal codes, courts, treasuries, veterinary and human medical services, and literacy efforts were introduced. This was truest, perhaps, among some of the emirates in Northern Nigeria (whose "Fulbe" elite were primarily "Hausa" in language and culture).<sup>32)</sup> To a lesser extent, Fulbe also have played crucial roles in the national political structures of Cameroon, Niger, and Guinea.<sup>33)</sup>

No exclusively "Fulbe" political parties have developed in Africa since Independence, although membership in or support of parties representing (some) Fulbe interests has been fairly extensive in several cases. In most areas, Fulbe have been under-represented in district councils and in the civil services, mainly because of their lower levels of formal education. Much Fulbe political influence, however, has been exerted through patron-client ties, particularly at local levels. Everywhere the Mbororo'en have been politically weak, even when helped by sympathetic sedentary Fulbe. In several countries, efforts have been made to organize livestock-rearers into associations, and through them to improve the quality and quantity of animals and animal products.<sup>34)</sup> Rarely, however, have they been able to prevent the loss of grazing lands—especially those used during the dry season—to the constantly-expanding farm and urban populations. Conflicts between graziers and farmers occur almost everywhere, despite new regulations and increased enforcement procedures, and in most areas court disputes seem to be decided in favor of the non-Fulbe litigants.

Political power among Fulbe has generally been associated with differences in wealth (land, cattle, trade, laborers, etc.), prestige, ancestry/descent, religion, and secular learning. Since being conquered, and having significantly lost control of both political systems and captive labor, sedentary Fulbe generally have been able to maintain much power upon the basis of higher Koranic learning, enlarged herds, increased farming and trading, and the employment of non-Fulbe to herd their livestock and farm their plots. Among the Fulbe in some areas of West Africa, there is now greater differentiation in the size of herds owned (and therefore personal wealth) than existed in earlier times. Unlike the Mbororo'en, the sedentary Fulbe have been able through more frequent interaction with traders (mainly Muslim) and townsmen to build new bases for participation in wider economic, political, and religious systems. Trade, significantly in cattle, has increasingly linked inland Fulbe livestock owners with the growing urban centers in the coastal

32) Smith (1960), Last (1967), Azarya (1976, 1978), Scott (1979), Watts (1983b), and VerEecke (1988).

33) Azarya (1978), Rivière (1971), Derman (1973), Robinson (1975), Baldé (1986), Camara *et al.* (1986), and Suret-Canale (1960).

34) Ezeomah (1985 : 8-9) describes one such group, the Miyetti Allah Association, which was organized in Nigeria in 1970, as a Muslim organization seeking to advance livestock-rearing. In 1980, the Government recognized it, but changed its name to the National Livestock Rearers Association. See also Swift and Maliki (1984).

forest zone (and, later, with North Africa, Europe, and Southwestern Asia).

Since the 19th century, pastoral Fulbe have been losing guaranteed access to many natural resources. While the demarcation of grazing areas or zones has been done in several nations, these seem to have but little effect on how these were actually used. Few cadastral surveys, detailed maps, deeds, and titles have been issued thus far in African countries, hence both the ownership of land and regulations about its use have been slow to develop. Today, African governments generally hold title to an overwhelming portion of their lands.<sup>35</sup> They have interfered relatively little with "customary" grazing rights of occupancy in most areas, although in a few places "certificates of occupancy" or freehold tenures are gradually being granted. Through these new measures townsmen, civil servants, and richer farmers and herd-owners seem to be receiving the greater benefits.<sup>36</sup> Whenever possible, the overall trend in nations where Fulbe live has been to convert pastures into small farms, plantations, cattle ranches, game parks, and reservoirs, or to use them for urban, industrial, and highway expansion.

Fulbe livestock production has largely been directed by governmental efforts, including the establishment of markets, the slaughtering and inspection of meat, prophylactic veterinary measures, regulation of seasonal movements, and increasing the production of meat (rather than milk) in order to fill some of the expanded demands arising internally and externally from urban residents, soldiers, civil servants, businessmen, military forces, and even some of the farming population. The present markets for livestock raised in Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria, for example, include not only Lagos, Abidjan and Accra, but also Zaire, Gabon, Libya, Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, and France.

A major change is now occurring with respect to the historically close association between ethnicity and livestock-rearing in the Sudanic and Sahelian ecozones. In a limited examination of the literature, I found<sup>37</sup> that individuals in 26 traditional agricultural ethnic groups between Senegal and Cameroon were reported to own, and sometimes quite significantly, an increasing number of livestock: Soninke, Malinke, Bambara, Sonrai, Buzu, Senufo, Mossi, Bissa, Gourmanche, Ga, Tallensi, Dagomba, Djerma (Zerma), Bariba, Manga, Koyam, Bedde, Challa (Rom), Waja, Kilba, Wurkum, Chamba, Yamba (Kaka), Mambila, Wimum, and Nsaw. None of these ethnic groups, however, has given up its primary dependence on agriculture. In addition, a progressively increasing number of civil servants, traders, businessmen, and teachers are investing in the ownership of livestock, especially cattle, in the areas where Fulbe reside.

The ownership of livestock thus seems to be increasingly characteristic of non-

35) Awogbade (1981, 1984, 1986), Blench (1984, 1985), Ezeomah (1983), and Swift (1982).

36) Adegboye *et al.* (1978), Awogbade (1983), Beauvilan (1977), Boutrais (1978a), Blench (1984, 1985), Hickey (1978, 1980), Swift (1982), Fricke (1979: 123), Sidikou (1974), Bourgeot (1981), Cissé (1981), and Lewis (1980).

37) References can be supplied by the author upon request.

Fulbe ethnic groups. As a consequence, a trans-ethnic "class" of livestock-owners appears to be emerging. An increasing number of non-Fulbe herders ("cowboys") are being employed by Fulbe owners; and, contrarily, many non-Fulbe who own livestock are employing Mbororo'en (usually poorer ones, who have lost their own herds) as herdsmen.

Paralleling the move of horticulturalists into livestock-raising has been the inauguration or expansion of farming by the traditionally livestock-dependent Fulbe. Here, too, however, most of the farm work has been done by non-Fulbe employees; and where urban/Islamic influences are strong, Fulbe women have not only been relieved from farm labor but they also have become more secluded in their households.<sup>38)</sup>

Increasing inter-ethnic contacts in the market, work, courtship, marriage, recreation, governance, and ritual have accompanied Fulbe sedentarization and urbanization. Most Fulbe populations are experiencing a decline in the authority of elders over the young, of parents over children, and of clan and lineage heads over their members. Individual rather than parental choice of marriage partners is becoming more common, and in some localities the *koowgal* form of marriage has disappeared. The traditional Fulbe emphasis on patrilineality is being weakened by the growth of bilaterality, as found among the Hausa, for example. Sedentarization of the Fulbe, especially in towns, however, has resulted in greater use of Islamic rituals, law, and courts. This also was true regarding Koranic education, but this seems less probable today with the growing provision of government-supported schools. National educational programs for pastoral nomads, as in Nigeria,<sup>39)</sup> Niger and other countries, have not been very successful thus far. The use of Fulfulde, which dialectally varies everywhere,<sup>40)</sup> seems not to be expanding; it faces much competition from the increasing use of French, English, Hausa, Arabic, and other languages which are more important internationally and/or receive government support for extending their use in schools, newspapers, radio, and television.

### Steps toward a Conclusion

It seems clear that "Fulbe" and "Fulbeness" vary by situation, by location, by period in time, and by the person who does the defining. In the many definitions that have been offered, one or more of the following features or criteria are often excluded: biological (racial) characteristics, language, cattle-dependency, adherence to Islam, and sharing a moral or ethical code (e.g., *pulaaku*). Looking into the future, there is no reason to expect that either the definitions or actual/concrete groups of Fulbe will stop varying in the five features just mentioned. Certainly, as

38) See Walker (1980), VerEecke (1988, 1989a), and Frantz (1980, 1981a, 1982).

39) VerEecke (1988, 1989b), Ezeomah (1983, 1985), Jackou (n.d.), and van Raay (1975).

40) See, for example, Lacroix (1952-53), and also Nelson (1981), Awogbade (1983), Adegboye *et al.* (1978), and Duffield (1981).

territorial shifts occur (especially southward, as well as from migratory to sedentary, and from rural to urban), the new patterns of interaction between individuals of different ethnic communities are likely to generate new definitions.

Despite their frequent symbiotic economic relationships, nomadic pastoralists are generally disliked by semi- and fully-sedentary Fulbe, as well as by agricultural ethnic groups and urban populations. Mbororo'en are often conceived in stereotypic terms to be noisy, thieving, shameless, dirty, distrustful, ignorant, illiterate, unstable, inefficient, superstitious, and destructive of natural resources. However, these negative qualities are often counterposed by attributing to the Mbororo'en such qualities as bravery, masculinity, fortitude, "being close to nature," non-corruptibility, and joyfulness. These latter attributes are similar to romanticized definitions or qualities frequently attributed to other mobile peoples, such as gypsies, cowboys, troubadours, "rock" bands, circuses, and itinerant preachers. We clearly see, then, that the criteria used for defining Mbororo'en and Fulbe, either in individual or in collective terms, revolve around a (shifting) set of dichotomous or polar terms.

In light of the demographic and economic changes occurring throughout Africa, it seems likely that there will be fewer Mbororo'en in coming decades. We have mentioned the effects of poverty, drought, cattle and human diseases, sedentarization, urbanization, and Islamization upon the continuation of a pastoral Fulbe way of life. This direction of change is not generally offset by the practice of some Fulbe, usually those who are richer and live in towns, to invest more in owning cattle, since they rarely assume (or resume) a "boring" Mbororo style of life.

The Mbororo'en also are likely to become "boring" as the result of their relative neglect by national and international "development" agencies, including the "World Bank." Dozens of programs designed to improve cattle production have been implemented in Africa, but rarely have they brought greater viability or lasting improvements to the Mbororo'en.<sup>41</sup> On the contrary, programs to intensify meat production by other means (such as through intensive pen fattening), as well as by putting more emphasis on agricultural and industrial production, contribute further to making the Mbororo way of life more "boring."

There are perhaps two categories of persons who are not likely to find the Mbororo'en to be more "boring"—although not necessarily less "romantic"—subjects to observe and study: firstly, those tourists who wish to see an "exotic human zoo" that seems to be disappearing [think of what is happening in Kenya, the Amazon, Nepal, and elsewhere today where organized tourism is expanding]; and, secondly, ethnological and other film producers who wish to make documentaries for the edification of students and various "publics."

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41) Goldschmidt (1981), Horowitz (1985), Adegboye *et al.* (1978), Awogbade (1982), Berg (1975), Frantz (1981b), Fricke (1979), Horowitz (1985), Oyedipe (1983), Riesman (1980), van Raay (1975), Watts (1987), Waters-Bayer (1985), Gallais (1972), Cissé (1981), and Boutrais (1986, 1988).

Our final concern is whether or not the "Fulbe," including the pastoralists (or Mbororo'en) are "finished," that is, whether they are now disappearing or are likely to disappear during the coming decades. We may recall that over the centuries many Fulfulde-speaking groups have changed considerably, including the assumption of new ethnic identities, e.g., Takrur, Tokolor, Haal-Pulaar'en, Fulakunda, Khassonke, Wassulonke, and Fellata. However, we also noted that even though Fulbe generally do not have high reproduction rates, in some areas their numbers seem to be expanding, primarily due to two reasons: firstly, they have high rates of polygyny and concubinage, and adopt or incorporate non-Fulbe into their households more often than do many other ethnic groups; and secondly, for both historic and contemporary reasons Fulbe have higher status, prestige, wealth, commitment to Islam, and styles of life that are both respected and emulated by members of other ethnic groups in several countries.

Southall<sup>42)</sup> has noted that in East Africa individuals' ethnic identification often gets redefined and reclassified when they move into cities. We have cited several similar examples of urban residents who call themselves "Fulbe" despite having come from the countryside with different ethnic backgrounds. It seems safe to predict, therefore, that in such cities as Garoua, Maroua, Yola, Kano and Labé, where Fulbe already comprise a substantial (and perhaps socially and culturally dominant) segment of the population, their numbers may increase even though the degree to which they maintain Fulbe social and cultural characteristics may be altered considerably.

During the last century the relative isolation of all Africans, including Fulfulde-speaking peoples, has declined progressively. In the territories which Fulbe inhabit today, two general varieties of social organization and culture seem to be spreading significantly. One great tradition (or "civilization"), which may be termed Islamic or Arabic, has influenced Fulbe life for many centuries. Its components are still spreading, and being adapted, by many ethnic groups in the sub-Saharan, possibly more in towns and cities than in the countryside. If the great Islamic/Arabic tradition continues to spread, the distinctive qualities of behavior and thought now called "Fulbe" are likely to disappear or to be redefined in some larger or trans-ethnic identity, one that may be given a label such as "Sudanic," "interior West Africa," or "Muslim African."<sup>43)</sup>

A second great cultural tradition (or "civilization") affecting Fulbe and most other Africans has derived mainly from Europe, although with the spread of industrialization and international commerce these new patterns of behavior and thought come from many parts of the globe. "Westernization" is not only stimulating the construction of roads, industrialization and marketing, musical tastes, literacy, and the importance of radio and television; it has also made secular

42) Southall (1961: 39).

43) Frantz (1981a). See also VerEecke (1988, 1989a, 1989b), Diallo (1986), Schultz (1980), Kirk-Greene (1986), and Collard (1980).

education, and a deep body of knowledge, increasingly available (and accepted) cross-culturally or internationally.

To the extent that Fulbe or individuals in other ethnic groups follow these new norms from "Islamic" and/or "Western" cultural spheres, their separate identities are less likely to persist. Theoretically, then, the descendants of the Fulbe can continue, perhaps "endlessly," while distinctive Fulbe groups and ways of life may disappear.

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