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Fulbe People in African Urban Society : A Comparative Study of Cameroon and the Sudan

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Fulbe People in African Urban Society: A Comparative Study of Cameroon and the Sudan

SHUN'YA HINO

Abstract

To understand the idea of Fulbe-ness, this paper compares two Fulbe urban peoples: in Ngaoundere (Northern Cameroon) and Er Roseires (Blue Nile, the Sudan), focusing on social stratification and occupational differentiation.

In Ngaoundere, Fulbe occupy the ruling and nuclear group (*rimbe* or free subjects of Fulbe *laamiid'o*) in the old part of town, the capital of the Fulbe lamidate since the 19th century. In Er Roseires, they are subject to the Arab ruling class but still occupy the nuclear group in the town, which itself was established mainly by Fulbe Muslims who migrated from West Africa.

The common features of Fulbe in the towns are as follows: 1) Avoidance of all kinds of manual work, excluding that concerning cattle keeping; 2) Avoidance of the occupations prohibited by Fulbe custom; 3) Avoidance of the occupations prohibited by Islamic law; 4) Strong desire to own cattle; and 5) Strong Islamic consciousness as a component of their identity.

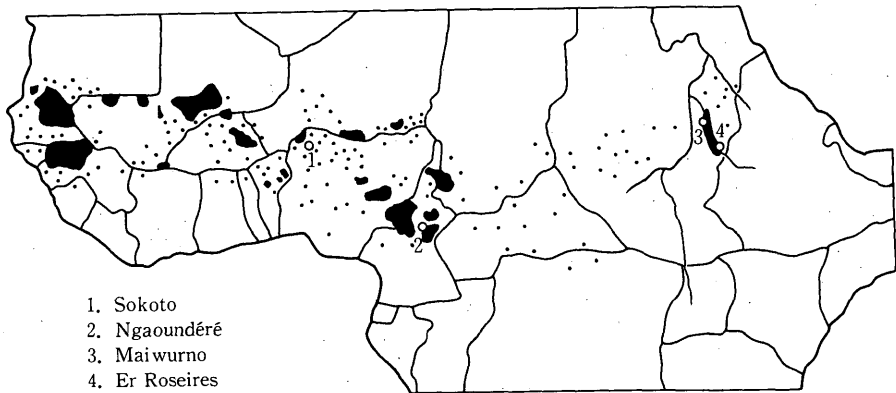
Due to the different historical and social background of each town, we find small yet significant differences between these peoples. Nevertheless, they share common attitudes to their occupational life, which derive from their Fulbe identity, called *pulaaku* which in the urban context is inseparable from their Islamic consciousness.

To understand the nature of the Fulbe identity, this study will compare urban Fulbe in Ngaoundere (Northern Cameroon) with those in Er Roseires (Blue Nile, the Sudan). It will focus on social stratification and occupational differentiation in the two towns and analyze how the Fulbe participate in the towns' social activities.

1. Fulbe in Cameroon

Social Stratification in Ngaoundere: Rimbe and Maccuŋe

In Ngaoundere, the Fulbe occupy the ruling and core group in the old town, constructed as the capital of their lamidate during the Fulbe jihad (Islamic holy war) of the 19th century. The people of Ngaoundere are divided into two social categories, the *rimbe* (free subjects of the *laamiid'o*), which includes Muslim people



Map 1. Distribution of Fulfulde Speakers (from Matsushita 1989)

such as the Fulbe, Hausa, Kanuri, Showa Arabs, and the *maccube* (un-free subjects of the *laamiido*), who had been conquered during the Fulbe jihad, including the Mbum, Duru, Gbaya and Kaka. Most of the *maccube* have converted to Islam. The *rimbe* have an organization of titleholders nominated by the *laamiido*, including *galdiima*, *kaygamma*, *sarkin yaaki*, *bawsi*, *sarkin hawsaawa* (chief of the Hausa), *may borno* (chief of the Bornu peoples), and *lawan* (chief of the Showa Arabs). Similarly, the *maccube* titleholders include: *galdima maccube*, *kaygamma maccube*, *sarkin yaaki maccube*, *sarkin koffa*, *ajiya* and so on. In addition, the Fulbe lamidate has the title of the *jawro* (chief of the town quarters or villages) including both *rimbe* and *maccube*. The *maccube* status includes many kinds of people such as nobles and the *jawro'en* (all nominated by the *laamiido*), royal musicians (*wammaaba*), un-free subjects of *laamiido* and un-free subjects of *rimbe*. Many of the un-free subjects of the *laamiido* live near his compound (*saare*) where they gather whenever necessary. When the *laamiido* goes out, his *maccube* follow him with arms such as swords, lances, fire-arms, etc. Some of the *maccube* work in the field of their master. In the *laamiido's* compound, we can see many of them working, such as *sarkin yarra* (who ushers guests to the *laamiido*), *saamaki* (his groom), *ajiya* (his messenger), *pana* (his guard) and *malla* (the guard of his harem; it is said that *malla* was an eunuch in the old days). In his compound, there live more than one hundred women including his wives, concubines, and domestic servants who form a kind of harem.

Development of Ngaoundere after Colonization

After the colonization of Cameroon by Germany, the colonial government retained the lamidate's organization, headed by the puppet *laamiido*, to facilitate colonial rule, tax-collecting, and enlisting labor. The colonial government also chose Ngaoundere as the capital of the local government but constructed its administrative and residential quarters separately from the old town and the traditional *laamiido's* quarters. It retained the traditional administrative organization

in the old town, and constructed a new capital on the hill of southwestern Ngaoundere with administrative offices, European residences, police and army stations, and a prison. Close to the new quarters, the commercial quarter was built, from which Europeans supplied goods and services to the local government. After World War I, France succeeded to the colonial rule of Cameroon. From the 1930s, commercial activities were gradually transmitted to Lebanese and Syrian immigrants. The local government also hired many Africans (mainly Christians from Southern Cameroon) as lower administrative staff, house boys, and manual laborers. It then constructed a new quarter at the Baladji district near the Baladji River of northwestern Ngaoundere.

The most significant objectives of colonial rule, along with the establishment of an administration, was the development of a colonial economic system, namely through the introduction of a cash economy. To replace the traditional self-sufficient economies and that of the Fulbe lamidate (based on the payment of taxes with cattle and crops) with a cash economy, the colonial government introduced a taxation system in which it forced people to pay head-taxes with cash instead of cattle or crops as was previously the case.

Through the construction of roads and other infrastructures, transportation was improved and the exchange of commodities accelerated. Although long distance trade of slaves, kola-nuts, clothes, utensils (mainly by Hausa merchants) had developed during the time of the Fulbe lamidate, it expanded rapidly following the introduction of the cash economy and the construction of roads.

Aided by the new roads, weekly markets were organized at many villages in the region. During the market day, many merchants from Ngaoundere and its neighboring villages would gather with villagers who sought to sell their crops, earthenwares and other local products. At the market, many kinds of consumption goods and crops were bought and sold. Thus, the crops and other local products, which previously had been produced for their subsistence, were sold at the market. People were able to obtain cash without going to work. At the same time, periodic cattle markets were held, and all this helped to develop the local economy and a regional society which centered around Ngaoundere. Many immigrants from Southern and Western Cameroon moved to the new quarters of the town. The new market place opened in one of these stranger quarters.

The introduction of the automobile in the 1930s also accelerated long distance trade throughout Cameroon and led to the development of Ngaoundere as an important center of transportation. Moreover, with the opening of the trunk railway from Douala and Yaounde to Ngaoundere in 1974, Ngaoundere became the most important junction between Southern and Northern Cameroon. With these developments, the population of Ngaoundere increased from 22,000 in 1969 to 58,000 in 1980.

Old Town and New Town

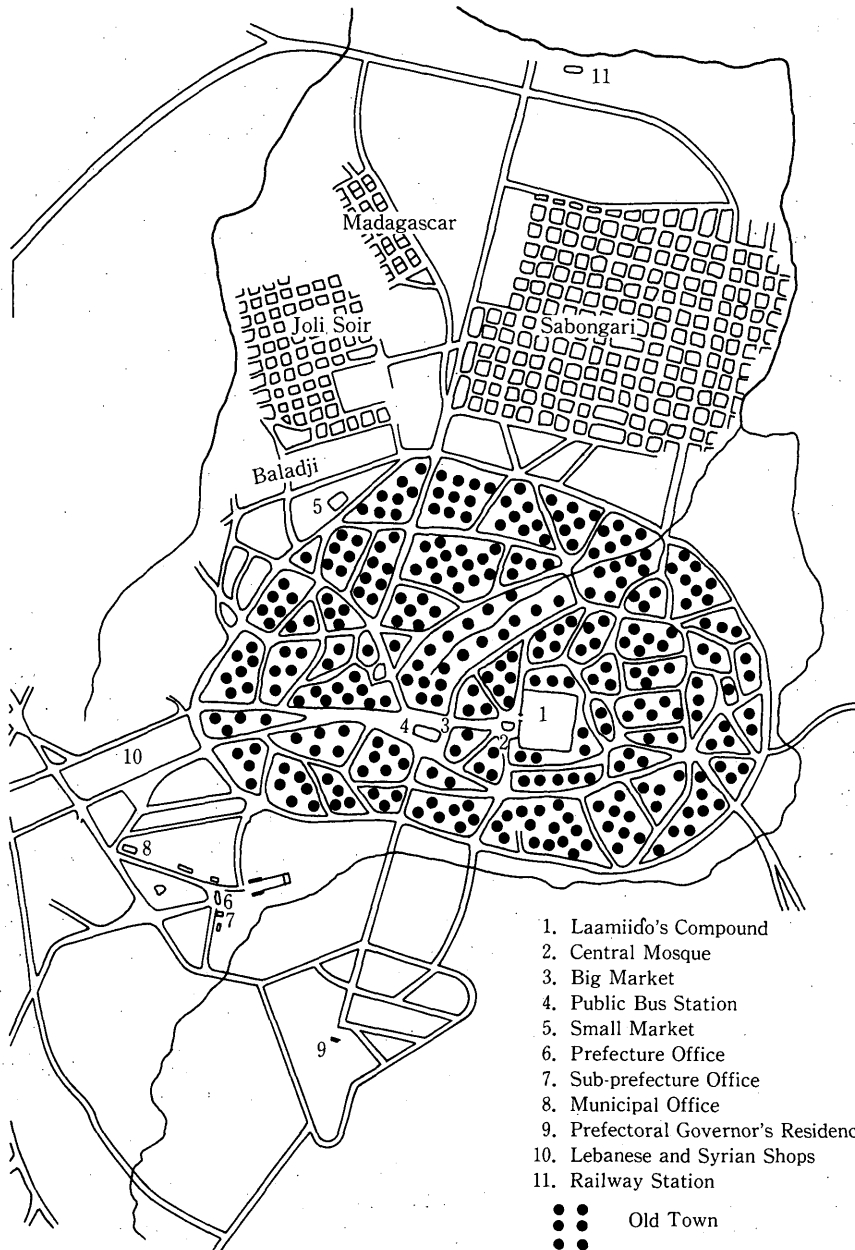
The town of Ngaoundere is divided into two sections: the old quarters, which

were constructed as the capital of the Fulbe lamidate; and the new quarters, which were constructed as the capital of the colonial local administration (see Map 2).

The old quarters are of elliptical layout, measuring 1.2 km from south to north and 1.7 km from east to west, surrounded by a ring road. In the center of the area is the compound of the laamiido, which is nearly square (about 1 km around). It is surrounded by a mud wall which is 7 m in height. The entrance faces west and includes a big entrance house (*dammugal* in Fulfulde, usually called *pakfil* in the Mbum language) which is also square with a conical grass roof. On the right side of the *dammugal* is located the newly constructed laamiido's office where the civil court of Islamic law is held weekly. The laamiido as chief judge deliberates on civil matters in the old town such as inheritance, marriage and divorce, and the *magatakarda*, a titleholder and the laamiido's secretary, also attends the court. In front of the laamiido's compound is a large open space, to the south of which is a big mosque and the compound of the *imaam* (Islamic priest). Alongside the open space is the public market, usually called "grand marché" (big market) which consists of about twenty shops selling clothes and groceries, along with places for selling food, meat, kola-nuts, folkcrafts, and utensils. Nearby the market is a public bus station for transportation to such places as Yaounde, Meiganga, Garoua, Maroua, and Tibati. Surrounding the market and bus station are many kinds of shops, restaurants, photographers, tailors, garages, and petroleum stations. The old town itself consists of many compounds along narrow paths with tall mud fences and entrance houses (*dammude*). The houses often join with many kinds of shops, tailors, barbers, carpenters, blacksmiths, and gold or silver smiths. The old town consists of about thirty quarters (*fattude*), each led by a jawro (ward head) who is nominated by the laamiido and subsequently confirmed by the mayor of Ngaoundere. The jawro is installed in the post by the city mayor and is given a turban and gown (traditional full dress) by the laamiido.

On the other hand, the new town may be divided into three sections. The first consists of administrative and commercial quarters, offices of the prefecture, the sub-prefecture, and the municipality, along with the post office, the police station, the court, hospitals, residences of civil servants, shops of many kinds, garages, hotels, restaurants, bakeries, bars, cinema houses, and petroleum stations. Previously owned mainly by Lebanese and Syrian immigrants, many of the businesses are now being transferred to Africans. The most recent developments include offices of car dealers, contractors, lawyers and insurance companies, also owned by Africans.

The second section of the new town consists of quarters of migrants who came from Southern and Western Cameroon during the colonial period, located in north-west Ngaoundere by the Baladji River. The new public market called "petit marché" (small market) was built here. Despite its name, the petit marché is, in fact, larger than the grand marché in the old town with more available produce and refined goods, and larger crowds. Surrounding this market are many shops, restaurants, bars, photographers, tailors, barbers, shoe repairers, radio repairers,



Map 2. Old and New Town of Ngaoundere

garages, carpenters, masons, and rooms of prostitutes (they are usually called *douze portes* in French). Unlike the old town, the new town does not have surrounding walls, but only consists of rows of houses and shops. Its population density,

therefore, is higher by far than that of the old town. The section also includes several quarters, each with a chief (*chef de quartier*) appointed by the city mayor.

The third section includes the quarters built after independence to accommodate migrants from the old town and from many other regions of Cameroon. They include Sabongari, Joli Soir, and Madagascar. Sabongari (new town in Hausa) and Madagascar are inhabited mainly by Muslims from the old town and many other towns of Northern Cameroon. They consist of compounds surrounded by mud walls which are smaller than those of the old town. Joli Soir is another quarter inhabited by newcomers from all over Cameroon, both Christian and Muslim.

As with the old town, the new town has a range of occupations suited to its people. For example, in both are found tailors although people say that the tailors in the new town are more refined than those of the old town. (Nevertheless, one can order shirts in either town.)

The Occupations of the Fulbe of Ngaoundere

The economy of the Fulbe of Ngaoundere depends strongly on cattle, cultivation by the maccube people, and the use of the labor of subordinate status maccube. The ideal of the Fulbe of Ngaoundere is to have many cattle, which they leave with pastoral or agro-pastoral Fulbe in the bush; to hire maccube to cultivate their sorghum fields; to have wives and children to cultivate vegetable fields in the compounds; and to devote their time to Islam, especially reading the Qur'an, without having to work.

Among the Fulbe whose ancestors were pastoralists, cattle remains a symbol of wealth. It is property and may serve as bridewealth. It may also be used to pay taxes and tribute to the *laamiido*, for instance, at the time of a turbaning of a noble or upon receiving some *horbe* women from the *laamiido*. Ideally, cattle are never consumed as food, but are left in the bush to increase in number. These Fulbe sell their cattle only when they intend to perform the hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca as an obligation of Muslims. They feel ashamed when they must sell their cattle to meet their basic needs such as food and clothes. When they leave their cattle with pastoral Fulbe, they pay them with cattle products, such as milk, dung, and urine, and they share some of the offspring with them, at a separate rate. The pastoral Fulbe use these products for their subsistence and also exchange them for crops. Although the town Fulbe now live far from their cattle, they still believe they are pastoralists. During my census, they replied proudly "I am a herdsman!" In the 1978 national census, 29.9% of the Fulbe registered their occupation as *bergers* (Table 2). *Bergers* in French, in the true sense of the word, means "shepherd," the equivalent of cattle breeders in the classification of the Cameroon census. Besides being herdsman, Fulbe also work as civil servants, cattle traders, merchants, technicians, and Islamic teachers, especially with economic changes since the colonial period.

Among the Fulbe, being a trader of cattle is thought of as a good occupation,

and slaughtering cattle in the name of God is a Fulbe custom. But, the occupation of butcher is avoided. In Ngaoundere, this occupation is in the hands of the Hausa who have organized a guild of butchers, headed by *sarkin paawa*, a titleholder appointed by the *laamiido*.

Trade is also regarded as a good occupation for Fulbe people, and 15% of those in the national census engaged in it. However, the Fulbe believe the Hausa have greater expertise in this area. On the one hand, they argue that Hausa trading is cunning and vicious. But on the other hand, they recognize that it is also well organized, cooperative and unified.

Many Fulbe businesses are small-scale while Hausa merchants engage frequently in large-scale wholesale trade, covering large territories. Fulbe merchants usually start their businesses from the so-called "commerce on the table" or from selling their cattle. "Commerce on the table" is a form of trade in which merchants buy from wholesalers small amounts of merchandise, such as cigarettes, matches, candies, batteries, and canned foods, and arrange them on small portable tables which can be set up anywhere in the town, following the movements of people. At night, they wrap up the tables and bring them home. Some of them can even buy a shop with the capital they earn from this kind of commerce. But Fulbe trading is individualistic, to the extent that it is said that "the most untrustworthy people in the world are father and brother." This means that even if one succeeds at trade, he will never help his kinsfolk. On the contrary, the Hausa work with their kin in trading activities and they may also organize guilds to further cooperation. Unlike among the Fulbe, Hausa merchants acquire loans for their businesses, and they even have mutual loan organizations among themselves.

The occupation of Islamic teacher is one of the most desirable among the Fulbe. In the 1978 Ngaoundere census, Fulbe occupied 57% of all the religious posts (see Table 1, which included Christian priests). However, the Fulbe believe that Hausa teachers have greater magical powers (acquired by reading Qur'an deeply) than they do. (The Hausa occupy 21% of all the religious posts in Ngaoundere.) Although the Fulbe fear the magical forces of the Hausa Islamic teachers, it is also said that the Fulbe are more pious Muslims than the Hausa.

There are other occupations which the Fulbe dislike, such as the sale of alcoholic drinks, the sale of meat, and work in restaurants. They have also delegated certain work to the *maccube* such as blacksmithing, pottery and all kinds of manual labor, including that of houseboy, porter, and water carrier. Recently, however, some *maccube* such as the *Mbum*, the *Duru* and the *Kaka* have converted to Islam, and now they too dislike manual labor. Instead, immigrants from such countries as Central African Republic and Chad have begun to undertake this work at low wages.

There is a one explanation for why the Fulbe avoid cooking in the public, for instance in a restaurant. In Ngaoundere, there is a strict distinction made between the fire of men in the doorway (*dammugal*) and the fire of women in the kitchen (*defe-teendu*). One can only roast by the fire of men, and one can only cook by the fire of

1978 census
Table 1. Distribution of Occupations in Ngaoundere by Ethnic Group (Percentage of Entire Population) from Gondolo (1978)

	Fulbe	Hausa	Born-uans and Shuwa Arab	Mbum	Duru	Baya	Laka and Northerners	East Vute	Coastal	Center South	Strangers	TOTAL	Number
	30.6	9.2	6.4	9.9	4.6	4.4	3.0	4.1	6.9	5.1	13.4	100.0	5530
Cultivators	31.5	7.5	8.9	30.7	4.2	2.8	4.9	2.3	0.6	0.7	5.8	100.0	1294
Herders	81.6	4.7	7.4	2.6	0.3	0.8	1.9	0.2	0.3	0	0.3	100.0	619
Total	47.4	6.6	8.4	21.6	2.9	2.0	3.9	1.6	0.5	0.5	4.0	100.0	1914
Construction	10.2	0.6	2.5	6.7	19.8	7.6	0.3	12.1	5.7	9.9	24.0	100.0	313
Tailors	39.1	26.9	8.9	8.9	0.9	1.4	0.9	0.4	7.5	0.9	3.8	100.0	212
Mechanics	11.4	4.6	0	0	8.1	17.4	0	14.0	24.4	10.4	9.3	100.0	89
Others	3.0	17.8	0	5.3	64.3	0	0	0	0	0	8.9	100.0	70
Total	7.5	14.2	7.8	7.8	40.9	17.1	2.4	17.6	14.7	22.1	13.2	100.0	684
Merchants, and petty traders	45.2	17.9	14.2	2.2	1.7	0.8	0.8	1.7	11.7	2.1	1.4	100.0	570
Butchers and bakers	7.5	60.9	5.5	5.5	2.7	3.4	3.4	0.6	2.7	1.4	6.1	100.0	146
Launderers	21.7	14.1	7.6	4.3	8.7	9.8	4.3	2.2	9.8	4.3	13.0	100.0	92
Domestics	5.9	0.8	0.8	0.8	5.1	9.4	2.7	6.7	7.1	2.0	58.6	100.0	254
Transportation	24.0	6.0	8.4	5.7	1.5	8.4	0.3	14.5	13.5	9.5	7.7	100.0	296
Administration	12.9	2.3	0.8	0.4	3.5	5.8	7.0	5.4	20.5	23.3	4.9	87.3*	682
Religious	57.2	21.0	11.9	3.2	2.7	0.5	0	0	0	0.5	2.7	100.0	185
Manual laborer	1.0	0	0.7	0.7	1.7	8.9	1.7	5.5	3.7	1.4	74.5	100.0	404
Others	13.3	66.6	0	0	0	3.3	0	3.3	3.3	10.0	0	100.0	30
Total	28.6	4.4	4.4	13.5	6.2	6.2	1.5	5.5	5.1	3.3	7.7	86.4*	23
Total	22.3	10.6	5.6	3.2	3.2	5.5	2.7	5.0	10.5	7.8	19.2	95.8*	2932

* Does not equal 100% due to uncomplete responses.

women in the kitchen. Moreover, men cannot touch the fire of women. Thus, cooking is work only women can do. Nevertheless most restaurants in the old town are managed by Showa Arabs, and only one restaurant is owned by an old Fulbe woman. Some Fulbe people complain about that, but it is not entirely taboo.

Selling alcoholic drinks in bars, marketing wine and brewing beer, all are strictly prohibited to Muslim people, so that the Fulbe avoid such activities. In 1975, a Fulbe widow dared to open a bar in the center of the old town and prospered despite the objections of the Fulbe. Nearly two years later, however, she was found dead in her room, probably of a heart attack. People believe that this was a divine punishment, and after that, no one have sold alcoholic beverages in the old town.

Decline of the Traditional Fulbe and the Rise of the New Fulbe

During the last ten years, the means by which the Fulbe had for many years maintained their privileged status has begun to break down. The first change that took place is in the nature of Fulbe ownership of cattle. As noted earlier, the town Fulbe had kept their cattle in the bush with pastoral or agro-pastoral Fulbe, in exchange for milk products and a share in their offspring. There had been good and trusting relations between the town Fulbe as owners and the village Fulbe as breeders. But, in association with the various economic changes in Adamawa, as well as in all of Cameroon, the price of cattle rose drastically. In particular, the opening of the railway to Yaounde and Douala hastened this change. Further, periodic cattle markets opened in many local places. The rising price of cattle and the growth of facilities for their sale attracted many to the business of selling cattle. Sometimes, the herdsmen would sell the cattle and inform their owner that they had died in the bush, or they would demand some additional rewards for their labor. As a result, the town Fulbe who owned cattle became suspicious of these people. In short, due to the social and economic changes in the area, the trusting relations between the town and pastoral Fulbe were essentially broken.

A second change was in the Fulbe system of cultivation. This had been in the hands of maccube until the development of the area and the rising price of agricultural products. Some maccube then secretly sold the produce of Fulbe owned fields, they demanded payments for their labor, or they refused to be tied to Fulbe fields and sought their own land. The trusting relations between the Fulbe rimbe and the maccube also began to be broken.

In addition, the maccube who had been household servants of the rimbe began to dislike manual labor and sought to obtain better jobs or to live in other places. The Fulbe could not prevent their departure especially because it had become very costly to keep the maccube in their household. Some of the rimbe's obligation to the maccube had included the assurance of their livelihood, the payment of bridewealth when they married, and the presentation of many kinds of gifts during the Islamic holy days. To obtain such labor services, the Fulbe began to employ at low wages immigrants from Central African Republic and Chad.

As shown earlier, Fulbe trading enterprises were small in comparison with

those of the Hausa in the old town or of the Bamileke of the new town. They had little ambition to work hard and instead preferred to spend their life in poverty reading the Qur'an and being pious. Fortunately, they had large compounds and fields. But, when they needed cash, they began to sell their fields, piece by piece, and they rented houses in their large compounds to people from Southern Cameroon, who worked as merchants, drivers, salaried men, mechanics, and prostitutes. In the old town, these people were often called "sudistes" and they began to mix with the Fulbe.

Another change is the area of migration, which has occurred among the indigenes of Ngaoundere, among Fulbe from towns of Northern Cameroon, as well as among commoner Fulbe from Ngaoundere itself. These people do not necessarily have the strong sense of custom or morality as do the traditional Fulbe of Ngaoundere. Many of the Fulbe from Northern Cameroon now engage in long distance trade and transportation, and some of the native Fulbe have begun to undertake such occupations and have succeeded. For example, there was a commoner Fulbe born in Ngaoundere, who had been a petroleum station attendant (owned by a Lebanese merchant) in the 1960s. In 1971, he bought a camion with his savings and began to work in public transportation from Douala to Ngaoundere. Then he invested the profit of this work into the purchase of more cars. In 1973, a Fulbe "big" merchant living in Garoua decided to patronize him in this activity. He was then able to engage in transportation and long distance trade on a large scale. Now, he has more than one hundred camions, more than ten shops, a trading company, a cinema theater, and a car-dealership.

Another example is of another commoner Fulbe, also born in Ngaoundere. During his childhood he had gone to Southern Cameroon with his father and was successful in the cattle trade with Gabon. After selling his supermarket in Libreville, he returned to Ngaoundere with his wealth. He then established a big plantation and poultry farm and continued to engage in trade and transportation.

It is often said in Ngaoundere that such upstart Hausa or Fulbe merchants start their businesses by engaging in smuggling of such commodities as petroleum, electric apparatuses, and watches from Nigeria. This, however may be more of a myth than a fact. The Fulbe, who have never been adventurous and speculative traders, cite the small-scale of their enterprises in denying their involvement in the activities and state that the success of such merchants may be due to the use of medicine or magic. However, it is clear that all of these new merchants have profited from the development of long distance trade, especially of petroleum, industrial products, cattle and food stuffs, and the opening of the railway from Douala and Yaounde in 1974. As noted earlier, Ngaoundere has become an important junction of travel and trade, which has stimulated its economic development.

Among the small-scale Fulbe merchants, prosperity and development has not occurred. They cannot compete with the large-scale enterprises of the modern merchants. The latter are not concerned about whether or not their business goes against their beliefs. For instance, a Hausa merchant bought a hotel from a Fren-

chman and was willing to sell alcoholic drinks to his customers. Yet, he himself would never consume alcohol.

For the traditional Fulbe who had engaged in the several week "cattle drive" to such southern towns as Yaounde, trading was facilitated by the development of the railway, which takes only eleven hours from north to south. However, this development also caused a steep rise in the price of cattle, so that the traditional small-scale trade of the Fulbe cannot compete with the large-scale activities of the wealthy trading companies or merchants.

The new businessmen are also able to perform the hajj to Mecca, as part of their religious duties. In Mecca, they also buy many commodities such as radios, cameras, and cloth, and then sell them when they return. Sometimes, before they travel to Mecca, they distribute catalogues to their customers and take orders for goods. They frequently bring with them to Mecca some poor and pious Muslims. This practice is considered *sadaka* (Islamic alms) and it is a praiseworthy deed of good Muslims. But, the expense can also be added to the merchants' tax exemptions. Traditional Fulbe also perform the hajj by selling their cattle or saving small profits from their businesses. Theirs is very different from the hajj of new businessmen, who go mainly for the trading purposes. But, it is the same hajj in appearance.

When modern Fulbe merchants acquire large sums of money, they often buy cattle and breed them to increase their number as a symbol of wealth, as among the traditional Fulbe. This is still a way of elevating their prestige, but they never deposit their cattle with the pastoral Fulbe as among the traditionalists. Instead, they keep cattle on modern ranches. First, they buy wide tracts of land which serve as open pasture for cattle, then they employ experts to breed them, and sometimes they employ European veterinarians to care for them. Unlike the traditional Fulbe, they intend to be modern stock farmers. Although the way of cattle breeding is different, the modern Fulbe still believe that owning many cattle makes one a genuine Pullo.

Unlike among the traditional Fulbe, who use the maccube to cultivate their fields, the modern Fulbe usually employ wage laborers to cultivate and manage their fields. Although they plant sorghum or maize as food crops, following the traditional Fulbe way, they also plant many kinds of cash crops or vegetables to sell at the public market in Ngaoundere or Yaounde.

As noted earlier, during the transition to a cash economy, many traditional Fulbe sold their land outside the town to obtain cash. The buyers of these fields were mainly such modern individuals. On the land they constructed well-equipped houses which they rented or sold. With the development of Ngaoundere, rich merchants from the south, employees of big companies and European technicians began to rent such residences for a high price. When the Fulbe in the old town rent houses in their compound, the tenants pay several thousand francs for one month, but the tenants of the newly built residences pay one hundred to several hundred thousand francs for one month.

Thus, the disparity between the traditional and the modern Fulbe is extending wider and wider, in accordance with the social and economic changes in Cameroon.

2. The Fulbe in the Sudan

The Establishment of Er Roseires Town, the Sudan

Er Roseires is located on the east bank of the Blue Nile River, 150 km south of Sennar. The 1983 census listed its population as 16,369. Before the establishment of the town in 1906 there had been stations of Malakiyya soldiers who had settled there during the Mahdi era. The Malakiyya are said to be the descendants of the slaves of the Turks. It is also said that Er Roseires was established by the Fulbe. In their oral tradition, the first Pullo who arrived was an Islamic teacher called Baba Yahia who came from east, through Ethiopia on his way back from the hajj to Mecca. He was a good and pious Muslim who took good care of the Fulbe immigrants who gathered there.

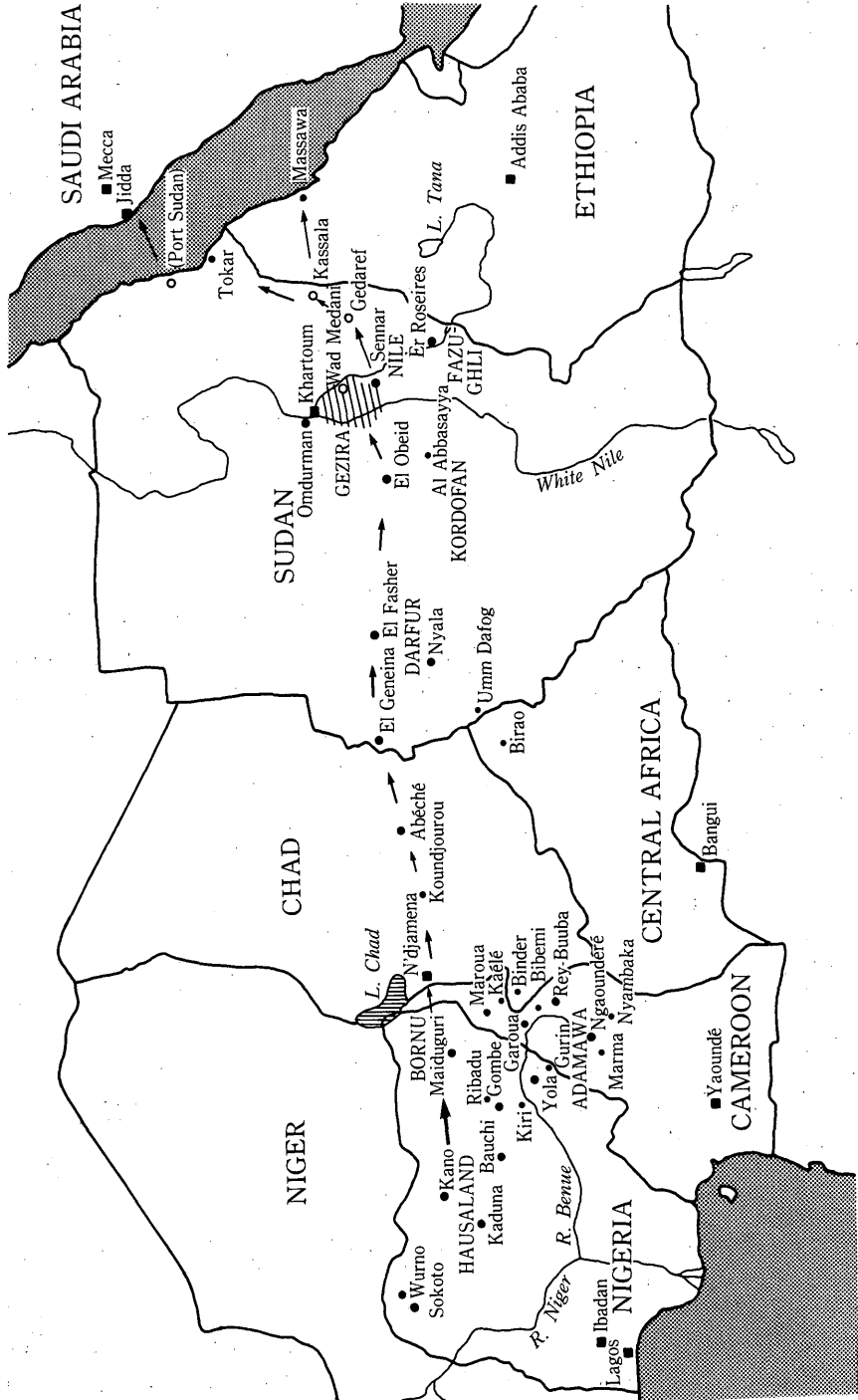
A Short History of the Fellata People in the Sudan

In the Sudan, there are many immigrants from West African countries, especially Nigeria and Cameroon. Such people are usually called *Fellata* (or *Fallata*), Westerners or *an-nas al-gharb*. The term "Westerner" was first used in the colonial records. These people are also called *Takarir* (sing. *Takaruri*), the Arabic name for Black Muslims from West Africa. The name of Fellata derives from *Pulata*, the Kanuri name for Fulbe. In fact, the Fellata consist of Hausa, Fulbe, Kanuri, and other peoples from West Africa, and sometimes people from Dar Fur Province of the Western Sudan were included (see Map 3). In the 1956 census, the Fellata population in the broad sense was estimated at about 105 million, that is 15% of the entire population of the Sudan (see Table 3).

Since the olden days, almost all Fellata people in the Sudan have supposedly arrived while going to the hajj in Mecca. Even now, many of them have passports or laissez-passer documents issued by the colonial government of British Nigeria or French Equatorial Africa for this purpose. The oldest pass that I saw was issued in 1916 by the Maiduguri Provincial Office in Nigeria. Of course, immigrants who came to the Sudan before the colonial time have no such certificates. Nevertheless most immigrants at present are legal travelers intending to perform the pilgrimage in Mecca, or are returning from Mecca.

Here, I will only sketch a brief history of these people. (For a more detailed discussion, see Hino 1986.)

The migration of the Fellata to the Sudan appears to have begun at the end of the 16th century and it continues at present. Many of them left West Africa to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca, and then some of them remained in the Sudan. The history of their migration may be divided into four periods :



Map 3. Pilgrimage Route from West Africa to Mecca

Table 3. Population of the Sudan (Ethnic Groups)

MAJOR ETHNIC GROUP	POPULATION	MAJOR ETHNIC GROUP	POPULATION
Specific Ethnic Group	Population	Specific Ethnic Group	Population
1 ARAB	3,989,533	(Western Southerners—cont.)	
10 Baggara	569,289	64 Zande	212,380
11 Dar Hamid	163,894	65 Other Western Southerners	40,995
12 Gawama'a—Budeiriya	416,868	66 Unknown Groups of W.S.	18
13 Other Arab Tribes—Central	494,197	7 WESTERNERS	1,358,639*
14 " " "—Northern	314,424	70 Tribes Western Darfur	902,798*
15 " " "—Eastern	86,706	71 French Equatorial Tribes	97,065*
16 " " "—Western	115,495	73 Nigerian Tribes	298,040*
17 " " "—North Eastern	15,551	74 Unknown Groups of W.	60,736*
18 Shukuriya	121,525	8 FOREIGNERS WITH SUDANESE STATUS	52,622
19 Unknown Arab Tribes	12,580	80 Sudanese of Western European Origin	10
1A Ga'ariyin	1,013,514*	81 S. of British and Irish Origin	6
1B Guhaina	765,562*	82 S. of Cypriot and Greek Origin	293
0 MISCELLANEOUS	93,695	83 S. of Italian and Maltese Origin	42
01 No Tribe	90,321	84 S. of South American Origin	3
02 People Unknown	3,374	85 S. of North American Origin	8
A NUBA	572,935	86 S. of North African Origin	28
A0 Nuba—North Eastern	68,634	87 S. of West African Origin	47,744*
A1 Nuba—North Western	79,979	86 S. of East and South African Origin	764
A2 Nuba—South Western	93,642	88 S. of Ethiopian Origin	1,991
A3 Nuba—South Eastern	215,160	89 S. of Belgian Congolese Origin	67
A4 Other Nuba	8,006	8A S. of Egyptian Origin	4,702
A5 Nuba—Dar Kababish	101	8B S. of Lebanese and Syrian Origin	870
A6 Nuba—Masariya	34,175	8C S. of Jewish Origin	8
A7 Nuba—Group Unknown	73,233	8D S. of Wester Asiatic Origin	1,978
2 BEJA	645,703	8E S. of Indian and Pakistan Origin	94
20 Amarar	97,651	8F S. of Southern Asiatic Origin	12
21 Bisharin	68,588	8G S. of Eastern Asiatic Origin	2
22 Hadendowa	259,594	9 FOREIGNERS WITH NON SUDANESE STATUS	206,517
23 Bani Amer	100,654	90 Western Europeans	155
24 Other Beja	34,175	91 Eastern Europeans	78
25 Beja—Group Unknown	73,233	93 British and Irish	1,335
3 NUBIYIN	330,032	94 Cypriot and Greeks	3,802
30 Nubiyin	330,032	95 Italians and Maltese	1,062
4 CENTRAL SOUTHERNERS (Mainly Nilotic)	1,982,503	96 South Americans	2
40 Dinka—North Eastern	11,271	97 Central Americans	4
41 Dinka—Ruwaeng	111	98 North Americans	146
42 Dinka—Bor	132,965	99 North Africans	260
43 Dinka—South Western	688,933	9A West Africans	165,227*
44 Other Dinka	318,616	9B East and South Africans	614
45 Fung Tribes	173,548	9C Ethiopians	5,081
46 Nuer	459,562	9D Belgian Congolese	648
47 Other Nilotic Tribes	197,490	9E Egyptians	18,129
48 Unknown Group of Central Southerners	7	9F Lebanese and Syrians	905
5 EASTERN SOUTHERNERS (Mainly Nilo Hamitic)	548,593	9H Jews	41
50 Ethiopian Tribes	653	9J Western Asians	7,066
51 Bari Speaking	211,199	9K Indians and Pakistanis	1,908
52 Latuka Speaking	120,042	9L Southern Asiatics	2
53 Didinga Speaking	93,862	9N Australians	52
54 Other Eastern Southerners	122,837		
6 WESTERN SOUTHERNERS (Mainly Sudanic)	481,764		
60 Moru—Madi	109,755		
61 Bongo—Baka—Bagirma	47,318		
62 Ndogo—Sere	71,298		

Source: Republic of the Sudan, First Population Census of Sudan, 1956, Final Report, Vol. 1, Balamoan (1981: 152).

* The population which includes the Fellata People.

- 1) The Pre-Mahdi Era (16th century—1881)
- 2) The Period of the Mahdi Caliphate (1881—1898)
- 3) The Early Stage of European Colonization (1898—1926)
- 4) The Period since the Opening of Gezira Plantation (1926—1960s)

1) The Pre-Mahdi Era

The pilgrimages through the savanna route (open since the end of the 16th century at the earliest) seem to have increased gradually in number under the protection of Islamic chiefdoms such as Kanuri, Wadai, Fur, and Funj (O'Fahey 1980). Although it might have been a difficult trip of many days and dangers, there were many stations along the route where pilgrims could rest or stay for some period to earn some money for continuing their travel. Such stations came to be called *zongo*, which means "the quarter of strangers" in the Hausa language. The pilgrims to Mecca used to follow the route from zongo to zongo and continue their travel.

The influence of Islam in West Africa seems to go back to the 10th century. In earlier times, it might have been limited to the religion of the rulers, Islamic teachers, and traders. But, by the late 18th century, Islam had spread among nearly all peoples of the Sahel and savanna regions in West Africa. The Qadiriyya Tariqa, which was influenced by Sufism, dominated the region. The Tijaniyya Tariqa arose somewhat later. One belief among many Muslims at that time was that the world would end at the end of the 13th century of Islamic Calendar (approximately 1882 A.D., after the appearance of the divinely-appointed Mahdi). In 1804, Sheikh Uthman dan Fodio, a Fulbe Islamic teacher from the Toorodbe clan declared jihad (Islamic holy war) against the impure Muslims, especially Hausa rulers, in Northern Nigeria. He then conquered much of the region and established an Islamic caliphate. The Sheikh himself denied that he was the expected Mahdi, as many people had believed. But he predicted that shortly after his jihad, the Mahdi would appear at Medina and would be from the family of the Prophet. Later, West African Muslims believed that the Mahdi would appear in some place of the east, such as Medina, Mecca, Blue Nile, or Adamawa. Some of the believers, especially fanatic Fulbe Islamic teachers and Hausa who were defeated in the jihad, migrated to the east, often the Sudan, and waited for the appearance of the Mahdi.

2) The Period of Mahdi Caliphate (1881—1898)

In 1881, Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi, an Arabic Islamic teacher from Dongola, declared himself the Mahdi and began jihad at Omdurman against the colonial forces. He defeated the army of General Gordon at Khartoum in 1882 and soon founded the Mahdi Caliphate covering all of the Northern Sudan. In 1883, after the sudden death of the Mahdi, Abd Allah Muhammad became the leader of the Caliphate. Muhammad was descended from a family of West African immigrants and had a firm belief in the appearance of the Mahdi. Many West African

Muslims who intended to support the jihad migrated to the east, joined him, and formed the main body of the Mahdist military organization. After the defeat of the Mahdist state, many of them still claimed they were *ansar* (supporters of the Mahdi) and they scattered throughout the Blue Nile region.

3) The Early Stage of European Colonization (1898–1926)

In the late 19th century, the European forces penetrated into West Africa and conquered the entire region including the Sokoto Caliphate in Northern Nigeria. Muhammad at-Tahiru, the 11th Caliph of Sokoto, attempted hijra (mass exodus) to the east with his noble colleagues and was killed by the British Army at the battle of Burmi in 1903. Many of his followers fled eastward and began to move to the Sudan. It is said that more than 25,000 refugees from the west passed through Fort Lamy (now Ndjamena) for several years following the battle of Burmi (Duffield 1981 : 27). Muhammad Bello Maiwurno, the fifth son of Muhammad at-Tahiru, escaped to the Sudan and established in 1906 his town, Maiwurno, on the west bank of the Blue Nile, south of Sennar. Maiwurno soon became the center of the Fellata immigrants in the Sudan.

After the defeat of the Mahdi Caliphate in 1898, the population of the Sudan decreased dramatically and a vast area was left to deteriorate. Many Fellata people filled up this empty region in Blue Nile and Kordofan.

4) The Period since the Opening of Gezira Plantation (1926–)

After the colonization of the Sudan, the Anglo-Egyptian government introduced the Gezira scheme for the development of a large-scale cotton plantation in Gezira, the wide region between the White and Blue Niles. In 1926, the Sennar Dam was completed and Gezira plantation was opened. The greatest problem of the scheme was obtaining a sufficient labor force. At first, the colonial government tried to employ Arab peasants from the Upper Nile, Egypt and Yemen, but it soon became aware that these people were not suitable for the purpose. They could not endure such hard work, and malaria and other tropical diseases infected them, and finally the Egyptian government refused to send these people. At the time, however, many Fellata people who had experience in savanna cultivation were living in the Sudan. They were strong and eager to work for good wages to help complete their pilgrimage in the shortest time possible. The Gezira Scheme Authority began to prefer them for work in Gezira. The authority began to ask the Maiwurno Sultan to provide Fellata labor forces. In addition, many other West Africans who heard the news of higher wages (by the long distance communication network from ear to ear, from east to west) began to migrate to the Sudan intending to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. In any case, the Fellata formed the nucleus of the laborers and the tenants in Gezira. After earning some money, they scattered to the villages and towns, as cattle herders, cultivators, and merchants.

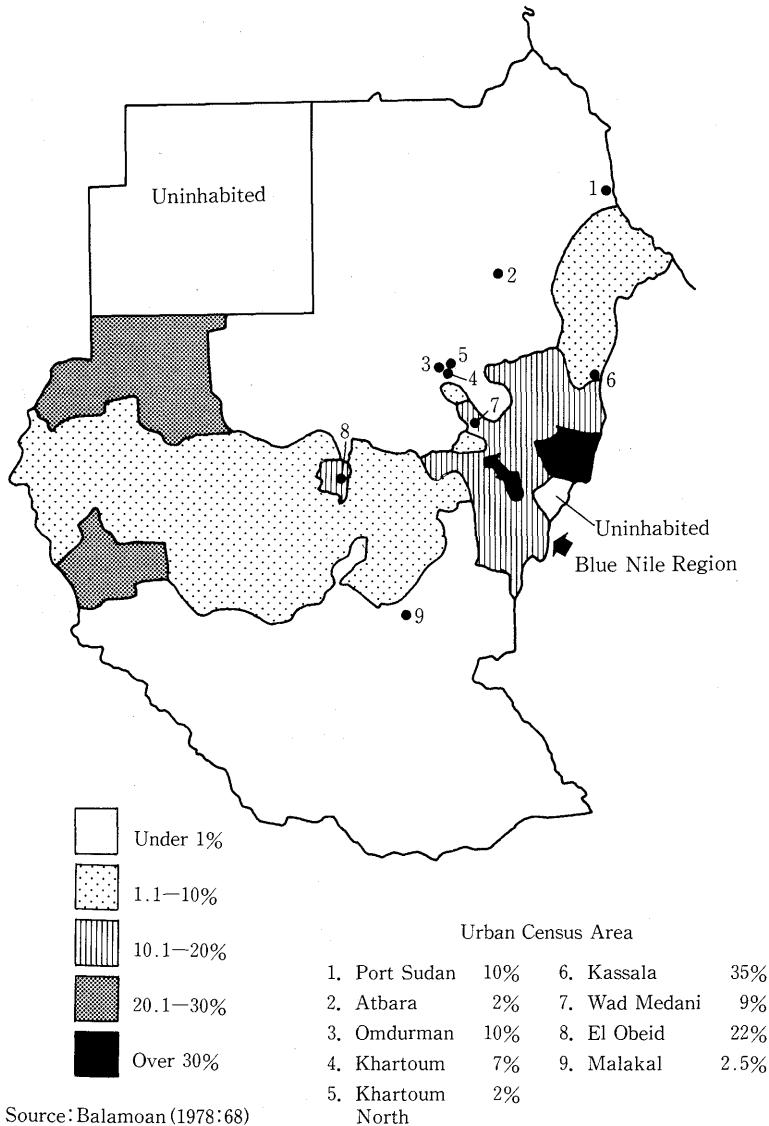
The Fellata in Er Roseires

About 90% of the Fellata are of Hausa origin. Many of them worked to obtain money and then scattered throughout the central Sudan. Their distribution follows the pilgrimage route across the savanna from West Africa (see Map 4). In particular, they settled in towns in the eastern Sudan. The Hausa became farmers in the northern part of the Blue Nile in such villages as Gedaref, Sennar, and Wad Medani. They also became traders or artisans in such towns as Khartoum, Wad Medani, and Kassala. The Fulbe, on the other hand, were semi-nomadic farmers based in villages of the southern part of the Blue Nile such as Er Roseires, Sirewu, and Ommdurman Fellata. Many said that they chose such places because they were suitable for cattle. From the funds they received from hard work at Gezira, the Hausa bought some farmland or invested in trade, while the Fulbe bought cattle and land. Amongst all the Fellata people, the Fulbe account only for 10%. But in Er Roseires, there are only three Hausa families and a few Kanuri families. The rest of the town's population of 4,500 individuals are Fulbe.

The Fulbe were attracted to this area for cattle breeding. Before a new wave of Fulbe pastoralists (Mbororo) arrived in the area, the Fulbe could never get so-called Fulbe cattle, which were big-horned with a hump. They only had Balta cattle which were bred traditionally in this area and were smaller than those of Mbororo's. It is said that the new cattle from West Africa was introduced to Er Roseires in the 1950s by the Mbororo. At that time, the Fulbe already living in Er Roseires were eager to have them. However, they soon became aware that they could not keep these cattle in Er Roseires because of the shortage of good grasses. Instead, they purchased cattle from native peoples around the Blue Nile and the southern area of Ingessena. In Er Roseires, they would live in the town and keep some of their cattle in their compounds. They also held cultivated fields in the suburbs, although it is said that in their early days in Er Roseires, they intended to raise as many as possible. At the same time, the Fulbe were also very pious, sometimes fanatic Muslims. They established their own mosque and set up strong organizations with every Islamic Tariqa.

In the 1930s, the railway from Khartoum and Sennar to Er Roseires opened along the west bank of the Blue Nile. Shortly before this time, vehicles had been introduced to the area and took the place of horses and camels. Many of the young Fulbe got jobs related to transportation, as drivers, mechanics, truck boys, railway linemen, and station employees. Others became tailors, shoemakers and metal workers.

After the establishment of the colonial district office in Er Roseires in the 1930s, several British officers and Arab petty officers settled in the town. Turkish merchants began to engage in commerce in the public market. Shortly thereafter, several Greeks joined them and opened shops, garages, transportation business, bars, and flour mills. Gradually the Turkish merchants were replaced by Arabs and Greeks, although the Greeks began to leave in the 1960s, following in-

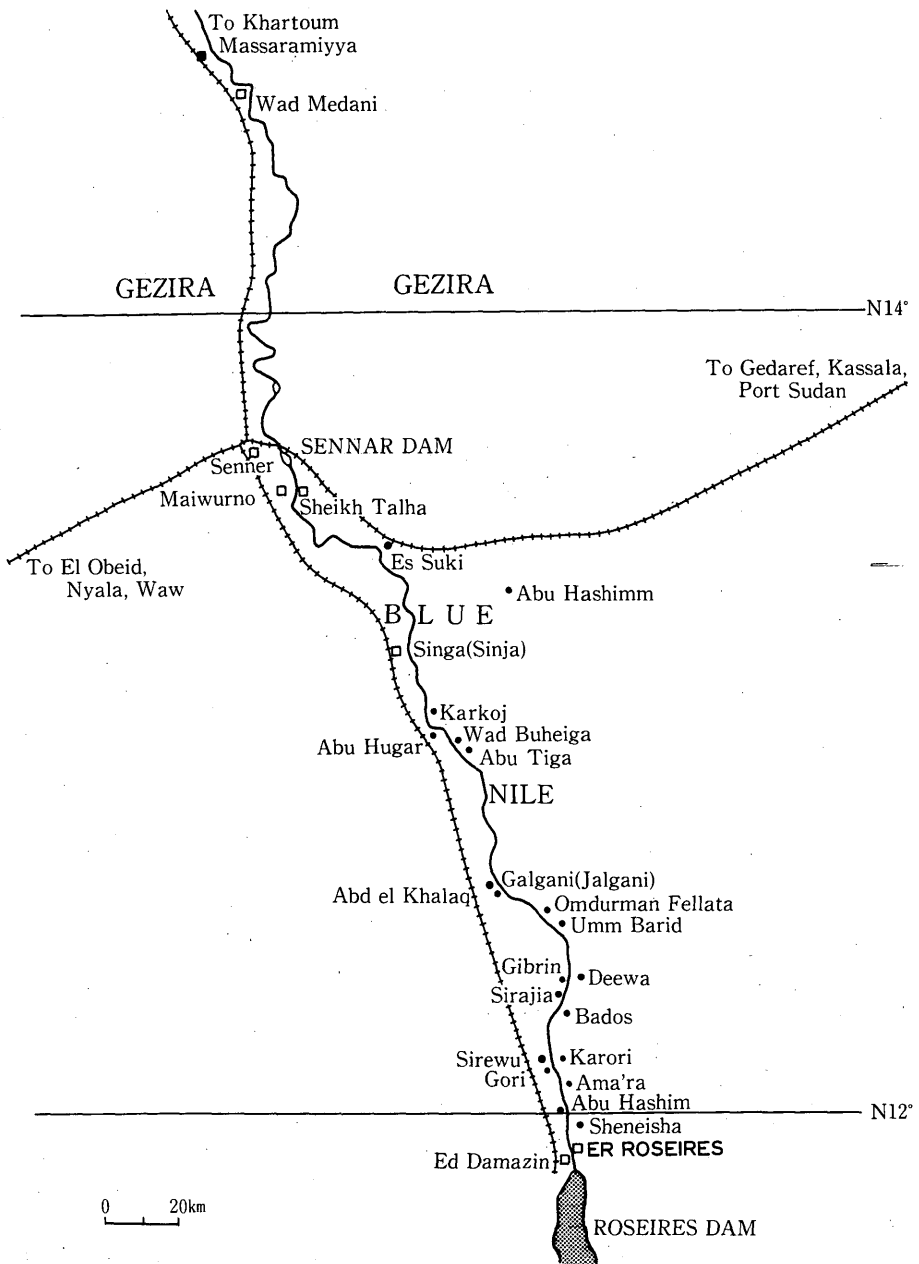


Map 4. Distribution of Fellata People in the Sudan

dependence.

During the 1940s, the local government prohibited the keeping of cattle in the compounds of the town's center, forcing many Fulbe to move with their cattle to the outskirts of the town. Others moved to the small villages along the east bank of the river such as Bados, Ama'ra, and Deewa. They were replaced in the town's center by Arabs from Northern Sudan, who became merchants, policemen, petty officials.

In the 1950s, a cattle epidemic broke out in the region and many Fulbe people



Map 5. Blue Nile Area of the Sudan

lost most of their cattle. It is said that before the epidemic, each owned at most 30 to 40 cattle. But now they either have between 5 to 10 cattle or none at all.

Following the granting of independence to the Sudan in 1960, some long-sighted Fulbe became aware of the importance of modern education for their

children. Before that time, the Fulbe had chosen Islamic education at the Qur'anic school. In the late 1940s, the chief of Sirewu (a small town of about 5,000 Fulbe on the west bank of the Blue Nile) who had good relations with the British administration decided to send some young boys to modern schools. Some of them advanced and later enrolled in the University of Khartoum. After that, many Fulbe children began to enter public school, so that there are now many Fulbe graduates of the university. In 1964, national statistics showed that the educational level of the Fulbe of the region was significantly higher than the national average.

In the 1960s, the construction of Roseires Dam was completed to provide irrigation for the region between the Blue and the White Nile and the basin of Dinder River. A newly planned town, Ed Damazin, was established on the west bank near Er Roseires railway station. Many officials, engineers, workers, merchants and other many kinds of people moved there, including many Fellata, both Hausa and Fulbe. In the 1983 census, Ed Damazin had 25,572 people, of which nearly 10% were Fellata (At-Tayib 1970: 7). The Hausa from the north engaged in large-scale trade and transportation, and the Fulbe became market sellers, mechanics, and drivers. In addition, many Fulbe people from Er Roseires got jobs at Ed Damazin in a boom which was related to the construction of Roseires Dam. All of the Greek people who had remained in Er Roseires moved to Ed Damazin. Included in the construction was a bridge built across the Blue Nile, joining the two towns. The transportation between them was by motor bus, usually called *boks* (< box), which were owned by Arab and Hausa. Some Fulbe people worked as drivers of the buses.

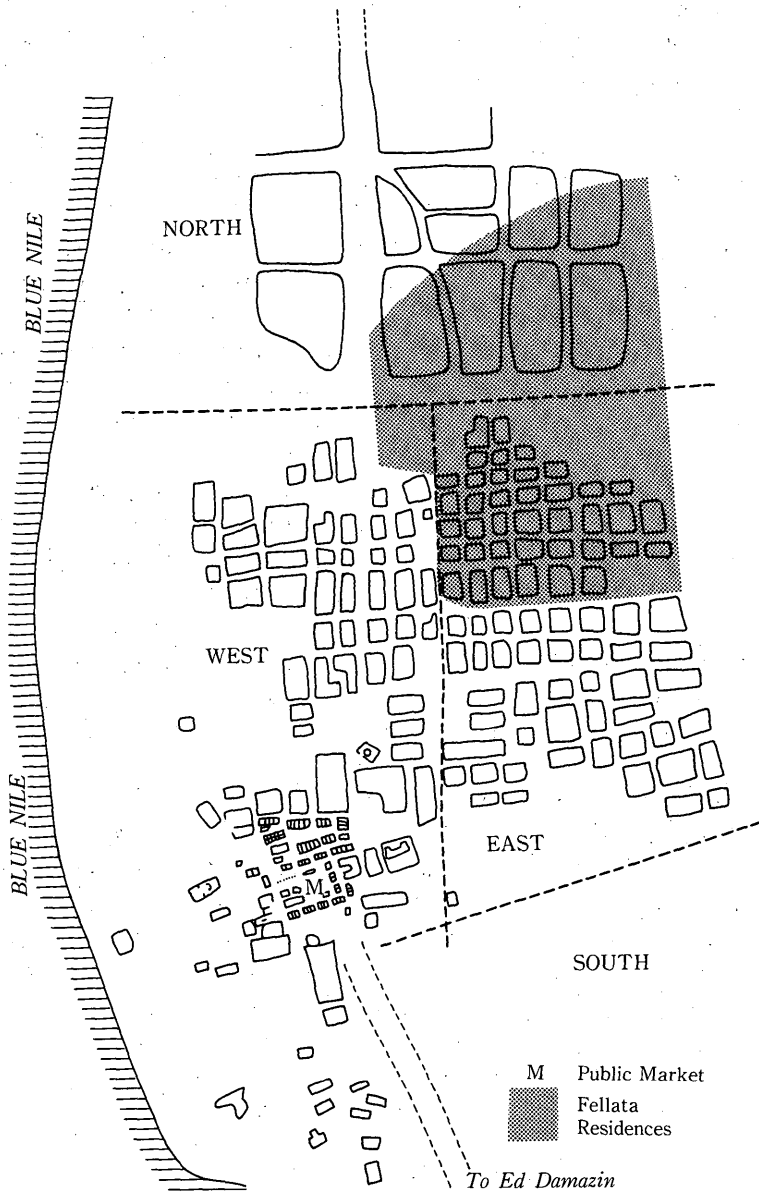
Administratively, Er Roseires is made up of four quarters, namely, East, West, South and North Districts (see Map 6). The Fulbe live together in the northern part of East District and also in North District. The Arabs live in the southern part of East District and in the northern part of West District. In the southern part of West District are government offices and the public market. South District is the quarter for the newcomers. About 10 km south of South District, there is one small village where about 10 Hausa families live and work as fishermen and fish sellers in the market.

Fulbe inhabit a cluster of compounds with grass or brick fences. At a glance, the compounds resemble those of the towns of Northern Cameroon.

The Occupations of the Fulbe People in Er Roseires

The occupations of the Fulbe in Er Roseires are extremely varied. They also hold some cultivated fields where they plant sorghum, sesame, beans, okra and many kinds of vegetables. They also keep cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys, fowl, ducks, and pigeons in their compounds. Those who keep cattle in the town have only a few head, but those in the peripheries have more, and they sell milk and yogurt to the town Fulbe.

Most of the Fulbe often have occupations besides cultivation or cattle rearing. For many Fulbe, in fact, cultivation is only for subsistence and cattle rearing is only



Map 6. Er Roseires Town and Fellata District

for milk for the household. The Fulbe are also merchants, small shop keepers, market sellers, drivers, mechanics, shoe repairers, tailors, petty officers, and school teachers. Some are also Islamic teachers, a few of whom supposedly have magical abilities. Sometimes, the teachers earn money for consulting the Qur'an for ways to find thieves, to prepare medicine, or to make amulets.

Recently, many Fulbe, especially the young, began to migrate to Saudi Arabia

and other oil-producing countries to work as technicians or interpreters among Arabs and foreign workers from India, Pakistan, and the Philippines. They may spend several years there, and send some money to their families. They also play an important role in obtaining money for the impoverished Sudan.

Although the Fulbe occupy most of the main occupations as the core group of Er Roseires, occupations such as big shop owners, large-scale traders, butcher's guilds, and transportation business are held by Arab peoples who came from the north. This is contributing to the formation of a Sudanese national society, which is adopting Arabic culture.

The Fulbe of Er Roseires (except young boys) do not engage in manual labor, in such occupations as porters or water carriers. In the town there is as yet no public water supply so that people must get their water from the Blue Nile. Many immigrants from Abassi (Abyssinia or Ethiopia) now take charge of this work, bringing water in two big leather bags on a donkey's back. The Balta, who are the indigenes of the area, carry goods such as wood coal, fire wood, cereal, and bricks, with the help of a donkey carriage. Thus, some of the wealthy Arabs and Fulbe employ Balta or Abassi houseboys to do this work. Many of the commoner Fulbe have no such means to employ servants and depend on their young kinsfolk, both boys and girls. However, we can observe the Fulbe working hard in their cultivated fields. They say that cultivation is not manual labor, because they do it not for pay but as work. When I asked them why they endured hard manual labor in Gezira, many of them answered that the work helped them accomplish their pilgrimage to Mecca, as part of their devotion to their religion.

Most of the Fulbe people in Er Roseires have lost the memory of their forefathers' decision to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. Although they speak Arabic as their mother tongue instead of Fulfulde and they are now in the process of Arabization, I also found they retain much of their traditional Fulbe culture in their daily life. Although they have decided to be Sudanese citizens, they also keep a strong identification with the Fulbe people. Sometimes, they criticize the way of life of the Arab Muslims as corrupt and hypocritical, compared with Fulbe piety and profound Islamic belief.

Nevertheless, some Fulbe have graduated from the university and have obtained work as civil servants, drivers, mechanics, engineers and others, especially the old engage in traditional, semi-skilled work such as mat weaving and shoe repairing. The class differentials between successful and unsuccessful, rich and poor are therefore remarkable. But even the poor Fulbe people would never think of carrying water from the Blue Nile or carrying luggage on their shoulders.

3. Conclusion

The common features of the Fulbe urban people in Ngaoundere and Er Roseires are as follows :

1. Avoidance of all kinds of manual labor (excluding that related to their religion and cattle keeping);

2. Avoidance of occupations prohibited by Fulbe custom, such as that of cook, restaurant owner, butcher, etc;
3. Avoidance of occupations prohibited by Islamic Law such as bar owner, wine dealer or brewer;
4. Small-scale involvement and individualistic trade, lack of kin-based cooperation in trading, and lack of mutual financial associations to support the trading;
5. Strong intention to own or keep cattle;
6. Strong Islamic consciousness as the basis of their Islamic identity. Preference to be pious Muslims rather than economically successful, and the assertion that they are more pious and purer than other Muslims, such as Arabs or Hausa.

However, the Fulbe of Ngaoundere were the town's founders and now form the core and ruling class in the old town, and in Er Roseires the Fulbe were pioneering immigrants and also form the core class, but are ruled by Arabs. Nevertheless, it is clear that both groups keep a common attitude to their occupations, which derives from their Fulbe identity, called *pulaaku* by themselves. In the urban context this identity is hardly separable from their Islamic consciousness and is also rooted in Fulbe pastoral heritage.

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