

NOMADIC HOMESTEAD AND ROLE STRUCTURE AMONGST THE FULBE NOMADS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The nomads operate an impeccably organised society where everyone identifies his roles and held tenaciously to it. Roles in typical nomadic communities are gender based with strong bias towards the efficiency of their flock management. No nomadic community exists outside its culture. Role players admonish their cultures. Under the pastoral nomadic culture, the homestead is the property of the women; they take custody of the household properties as well as the milk procurement and sales. The male child is cultured along the ways of raising, nourishing and managing the family flock. Recent studies have discovered some developments around the homestead of the Fulbe nomads in Adamawa and Taraba states of Nigeria. How far has this influenced their role distribution? Using a simple descriptive approach in explaining the data collected from the field work. A systematic comparative analysis of the nomadic groups was undertaken. This paper examines the entire homestead pattern; study the numerous roles divisions and recommended an improvement in the facilities required for a better housing of the nomads. The findings established that there is sexual stratifications in the tent arrangement and room structure of the Fulbe nomads. Within the tent arrangement; the women are usually allotted a bigger spaced to the left hand side where they occupy. The bed on the left hand side belongs to the wife, while the right hand side is for the husband. Aside this arrangement the women also have a space allocated for the utensils around the eastern part of the tent while the water pot is on the western part. Fulbe nomads are indeed highly organized in terms of space management and allocation.

Introduction

The nomads are a group of organized and culturally committed people. They jealously guide their culture, defend their profession and are absolutely committed to the demand of nature. The nomads are neither stupid nor disorganized, rather they explore to their greatest advantage, their resourceful ingenuity in understanding the time and seasons to determine their pattern of mobility.

Amidst the ever growing civilisation as well as technological advancement around the world, there exist some pockets of isolated primitive groups of people who dwell largely in the sandy deserts, snowy wastes and the thick forest of the tropical regions. The dynamism that ushered in the industrial revolution of the 1880s, which propelled the entire world into stepping fully into the age of technology, seems to make little or no positive impact on them. They live entirely in a world of their own, fully armed with their culture and seem to be highly impermeable to foreign cultural influences.

The current dilemma is what would likely be their future under the on-going dispensation, especially with regard to the possibility of integrating them into the main stream of the technological development and civilisation or the unfortunate possibility of brushing them aside or total extermination. These people include the spirit ridden aborigines of Australia, the veiled Tuareg of the Sahara, the disciplined Zulus of South Africa, the head - Shrinking Jiravos of the Eastern Andes, the happy Eskimos of the Arctic. Others include the pastoral Fulani [Fulbe] nomads of Nigeria, the nomadic Lapps of Scandinavia, the stone-age men of New Guinea, the pygmies of Congo Central Africa, the modest Rifi of Northern Morocco, the fishermen nomads of Nigeria, the fishing Schooners of North America, the Tuareg people of Ahaggar, the Mbuti hunters and gatherers pygmies of Ituri forest of Zaire and many others (Daramola, 2002).

The Nomads

By way of definition, a nomad is one of the groups of people with no permanent home who travel about with their sheep and cattle, etc in search for a means of living. The word 'nomad' is not restricted to the wandering Fulbe, but to all the other peoples with no permanent home, and this includes the Shuwa Arabs, the Kwanyaro, the Boduma and the Baduma of Borno, and the Azbenáwa and dark Buzu communities in parts of the extreme northern boundary, bordering the Niger Republic. The Baduma are Lake Chad settlers' fishermen, who live around the lake. Many have adopted the villages and towns neighbouring such rivers as their permanent homes.

Population

Table 1: ESTIMATED POPULATION OF NOMADS IN TEN NORTHERN STATES BY ETHNIC GROUPS IN NIGERIA

State	Fulani	Shuwa Arab	Baduma	Kwanyaro	Total
Bauchi	700,000				700,000
Benue	30,000				30,000
Borno	600,000	1,011,519	35,000	20,000	1,666,519
Gongola (Adamawa and Taraba)	1,300,000				1,300,000
Kaduna	400,000				400,000
Kano	1,000,000				1,000,000
Kwara	25,000				25,000
Niger	30,000				30,000
Plateau	450,000				450,000
Sokoto	650,000				650,000
Total	5,185,000	1,011,519	35,000	20,000	6,251,519

Source: UNDP, UNESCO UNIJOS Project on Education of Nomadic families Bauchi, Gongola (Adamawa and Taraba) and Plateau states (1988).

It has been generally, pointed out that nomadism increases in relation to the increasing wants, uncertainty and serious threat to existence (Daramola 2002). In other words it can be concluded that nomadism is propelled at the slightest threat to the basic ingredient of human sustenance. It is seen as human ecological reaction to

its endangered environment. The Fulbe pastoralists are highly sensitive and they flee from any environment that poses threat to the existence of their herd. They are also highly guided by a number of codes of conduct and any serious breach of such code, could manifest in reduction in the fertility and milk production as well as increase in the mortality of the herd upon which the offender is dependent.

Nomadic Fulbe Homestead:

Fulbe Socio-Spatial Concepts

The Fulbe are the pastoral Fulani who occupy the northern area of Nigeria. They are predominantly herders with a strong drive for movement with their cattle, sheep and goats. They are in constant movement in search for grazing for the animals. Due to their high level of mobility, they occupy tiny tents and hamlets. 'Wuro' is a general term used to describe pastoral Fulbe homestead. This term can also be used to describe a home of one single hut, a small or-large compound, a cottage or village, a sizeable town, a large urban centre or even the whole world, depending on the circumstances (Sa'ad, 1983). A *wuro* exists only if there is a woman living inside. In which case an unmarried man living in a hut can not refer to his hut as a *wuro*. Physically, the *wuro* consists of a minimum of one hut owned by a woman built either by her or for her by male members of the community. The Fulbe society operates as a community or society of small sizeable units each constituting a *wuro*. A *wuro* is thus a sociographic unit, with a man as its head, whose members are joined by significant ties of kinship or neighbourhood (Saad, in Tahir, 1995).

In other words a *wuro* does not exist without a woman. This emphasises the importance of woman in the Fulbe concept of a *wuro*. This also explains the fact that Herdsmen base camps during their itinerary in absence of the wife does not constitute a *wuro*, nor unmarried woman in a group of men.

Research Methodology

The study was carried out amongst the Fulbe nomads in Adamawa and Taraba states of Nigeria. A total of 114 nomadic homesteads were studied from five distinct locations, *Song* area *Numan* area, *Zing* area, *Jalingo* area and *Mayo-Belwa* area. The heads of each family were the target as they are in the best position to give the required information especially on the socio-economic and housing requirements sectors.

The interview was conducted on the participant and observer's level and this enabled us to make a lot of inferences on most of their claims. The questionnaire was divided into sections; General demographic, housing requirements under which we have users perception of their current housing needs and communal amenities the third section is political and economic information; while the fourth is on human and animal health care. The data collected were descriptively analyzed. The study considered amongst others the following variables:

Size of families

From the data collected, it was discovered that the average household is determined by the size of the family, the average size is about 7-9 members. The nomads that originates from Song, have an average of 6-9 family size, Jalingo has between 5-7, Mayo-Belwa, 5-7, Zing, 6-9, Numan, 6-9. The larger the family size, the larger the needs for large herd size (Daramola, 2002).

Level of Enjoyment of Nomadic Lifestyle

On the issue of nomadic movements, about 88.9% in Song abhor the nomadic lifestyle, 73.7% in Numan; 78.3% in Mayobelwa; and 93.3% in Zing. In Jalingo, there seems to be more exceptions while 43.3% claimed to be enjoying the nomadic lifestyle, 56.6% do not enjoy it. This result thereby indicates that the nomads in Jalingo need to be given dual consideration. Majority claim the nomadic lifestyle is already part of them as they would not like to lose their identity. 78.1% listed the following requirements to enable them settle down; dams, grazing reserves, veterinary services, good sanitation facilities, market space while 53% insisted only on water and pasture. Others did not respond.

Time of commencement of itinerary

Annually 49.1% of the nomads commence their itinerary in (November-December) 43.9% in January - February, 7.0% did not respond. Of this figure, 90.2% of them maintain one or two routes at the maximum.

Spatial Organisation of Fulbe Housing

One of the major factors that influence the organisation of space amongst the Fulbe communities is the east-west orientation. The pastoral Fulbe largely believe that west is synonymous to front, while east is back (Stenning, 1959). At the back of every camp, there is a curved back fence made from tree branches. This is believed would keep off hyenas and also deflects any other attack on the cattle. The women with their bed shelters spaces are provided in front of the back fence (towards the East end) and the domestic hearth 'lite suudu'. All these constitute the 'suudu' or the home. The youth are allocated spaces to keep vigil on the cattle against intruders. A calf rope is used to demarcate the wives area from the general area. Coral fire is kept to keep the animal warm.

Apart from North-South orientation, there also exists the North-South quasi-orientation within the compound. The North-South orientation reflects the seniority level of individual within the compound. For example even among the wives who occupy the east end of the compound, the most senior wife places her bed shelter at the most northerly end, while the next one closer to her and further down. Under this arrangement it is easy for the most senior wife to be identified based on the position of her shelter in the compound. In a similar manner, under a more general setting, where there are more, than one family in the camp, the head of the family has his hut located at the most northerly end, while the next in rank come closer to him and down the trend like that to the south.

However, there are some slight changes to this culture, for example, in a study carried out by Sa'ad 1991 in Jega village of Gwandu area the Sarkin Fulani of the camp had his camp at the centre of the village, against the popular North end, however, his son, (the crown peace) had his hut directly to the north end of him, while the other notable chiefs in the village had theirs next to the son (crown peace). The cattle are usually corralled to the west of the camp.

With this fundamental belief, the idea of land ownership and permanent sites are at variance with the nomadic ideology. Consequently, they place premium on structures that could be easily dismantled or abandoned depending on the building resources and level of mobility. Stenning (1959) observes that the Wodaabe of Western Bornu

have no attachment to land or specific place. Their home (*wuro*) is any favourable ecological condition for pastoralism. Each 'suudu' is about 3-4metres in diameter. It has two sleeping platforms on both sides with a tiny entrance. The bed on the left hand side belongs to the wife, while the right hand side is for the husband. The nomads appreciate order in every sphere of their endeavour.

Table 2: Preferred place to sleep [Men].

Preferred place to sleep	Frequency	%
Inside tent	11	9.6
Outside tent	18	15.8
Anywhere	80	70.2
No response	5	4.4
Total	114	100

Source: Field Studies (2003)

Amongst the men, 70.2% prefer to sleep either outside or inside, where 9.6 % preferred inside and 15.8% prefer to sleep outside the tent. The reason for sleeping outside is both for cattle security and weather condition. Largely, the women preferred to sleep in the tent.

Concerning the use of building materials in their shelter, 70% use thatch; while others use mud blocks (these are the settling Fulbe). 62.3% construct their shelter through personal efforts and 27.2% combined their efforts with that of the members of their family. This is due to the casualness of the structure 4.4% engage others to do them. Amongst the Fulbe tents, there are no provisions for windows. About 47% have 6-metres diameter tent, while 41.2% use 4 metres and 9.6% prefer tent of 8 metres diameter.

Table 3: Erection and Demolition

The time span of erecting the tent, the following results was recorded:

Hours/Day	Freq.	%
2 – 5 hours	64	56.1
5 – 10 hours	45	39.5
1 – 2 days	9	4.4
Total	114	100

Source: Field Studies (2003)

From the result it can be concluded that an average nomadic tent takes between 2-10 hours to erect.

Activity within the tent: The research was able to record 92.1% [105] the following activities that take place in the tent entertainment of guest (female), eating, cooking, sleeping and storage. 95 .6%[109] the responder defecate in the surrounding bushes, 50% use communal bathing area, 30% individual private bathing area, while 20% bath in the nearby stream.

Table 4: Cooking Fuel.

Coking fuel	Freq	%
Fuel wood	55	74.6
Charcoal	23	20.2
Kerosene	5	4.3
Total	114	100

Source: Field Studies (2003)

Firewood is commonly used because of its availability in their environment. The use of kerosene is not popular. Regardless of the firewood, 65% (74) of the Fulbe women carry out their cooking either inside or outside the tent while 7.9% (9) insist in cooking inside the tent. (26) 22.8 % outside. At night 83.3% make use of kerosene lamp, while 12.3% (14) use oil lamp.

Leisure

Under this consideration the research attempts to examine the emphasis of leisure time to the Fulbe nomads. Under examination, 86% (98) claimed they have leisure time, (13) 11.4 said they do not. To establish the way this time is spent.

Other square no response

Table 5: Leisure Activities

Activities	Frequency	%
Chatting	46	40.4
Visiting	27	23.7
Hobby	19	16.7
Repairs	4	3.5
Craft	2	1.8
No response	16	14
Total	114	100

Source: Field Studies (2003)

Chatting takes the greatest percentage of their time. This is usually done in the market places where they exchange ideas and experiences, plan for the future or next trips and send necessary messages to the home base (split family unit). Fulbe rely heavily on information and this is got from chatting with each other at regular market places.

Shelter Arrangement: 50.9% (58) the respondents would not like to live in the same shelter with their wives but rather keep them together in the same compound. 44% did not respond while 44.7% would prefer to live together under the same tent. Amongst the respondents, all of them would like the wives to own their separate shelter within the same compound.

Shade for Animals: 65% do not want a shade for their cattle, while 21.9% desire a shade for the cattle, 14% are indifferent. 3.5% have no response.

Gender Activities within the Fulbe Homestead

In a similar study carried out by Saad, 2002, the following gender roles were established by the Fulbe school children.

Table 7: Activities Before and After School According to Gender.

The Boys		The Girls	
Activities before school	Activities after school	Activities before school	Activities after school
Fetch water	Go herding	Fetch water	Go to market to sell milk and butter
Clear the compound grasses	Go fanning	Help prepare breakfast	Collect firewood
Milk the animals and remove ticks	Go to Quranic school	Sweep surroundings	Help cook Lunch and Dinner
			Grind millet and other grains
			Go herding.

Source: Saad, (2002) research report.

Table 8: Economic Activities According to Gender

MALES	FEMALES
Herding	Selling Milk, Youghurt and other dairy products
Cattle trading	Selling of darkeree shobbe/fura and wara
Weaving and selling of ropes	Hair plaiting
Farming	Crafts such as weaving beddi, mat and hat; knitting and design on calabashes.

Source: Saad, (2002) research report.

From the table 7 above, it can be established that the role stratification based on gender factors is of greater burden on the female gender than the male. This invariably implies that so many responsibilities are placed on the female gender and thus require adequate education.

There are various groups of pastoralists and these include the pure nomadic group, the semi-nomadic and the sedentary group. Women's work varies from group to group. Amongst most settled rural families, women participate in agricultural work only during light harvesting periods, and are responsible for the production of milk products. In some continents, some women specialize in handicrafts such as carpet and felt making. For instance, the Nuristani women plough the fields while the men herd the flocks and process the dairy products. The care of the young animals and kids are left in the hands of the women. They spin the wool sheered by men and weave the fabric from which their tents are made. Felt-making for yurt coverings and household rugs is usually a woman's activity. While on itineraries, the women are actively involved in the erecting and pulling down of the tents. Although statistics indicate that by 1978 women were joining the workforce in increasing numbers, only about eight percent of the female population received an income. The current revival of conservative attitudes toward appropriate extra- domestic roles for women and the criticism of women's visibility in public have largely impacted these professional women. Islamic texts do not delineate roles for women.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to establish the fact that there is clear distinctive sexual stratification of roles amidst the pastoral families. The male child has a clearly defined role which is the herding while the female child has a slightly more complex role. Education of the nomads is a gradual exercise that requires a lot of planning and encouragement. The female gender are still lacking behind in the education sector.

Generally, housing is a women property amongst the Fulbe nomads. The men attach more importance to their dressing than their shelter. They spend more time in the open shelter than in the tent. They are more at home with the weather as much as their herds. To the male Fulbe, the survival of the cattle is their survival, thus they are in closed environment with their cattle. Even within the tent arrangement, the women usually have a bigger space allocated to the left hand side where they occupy. The bed on the left hand side belongs to the wife, while the right hand side is for the husband. Aside this arrangement the women also have a space allocated for the utensils around the eastern part of the tent while the water pot is on the western part. Invariably, the women and her attachment occupy about 75% of the total space allocation within each nomadic tent. Fulbe nomads are indeed highly organized in terms of space management and allocation.

However, it is recommended that there is a need for an improvement in the facilities required for a better housing of the nomads. The Nomadic Education programme should be encouraged to create a better awareness amongst the community. The government should provide more infrastructural facilities for the nomads to improve their socioeconomic lifestyle.

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