

Endangered Rituals of Fulbe Marriage in Sokoto State

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ABSTRACT

This research work looks at marriage rituals in some selected Fulbe local governments in Sokoto with a view to study both the language and material rites involved in the entire process of Fulbe marriage in the study area. The problem is the gradual adaptation of the culture of the dominant environment. This process leads to substitutions of both internal and external culture of the endangered language in favour of the dominant language. Two sampling techniques were used in this study - Stratified and Snowball Purposive sampling techniques. Stratified sampling was used to sample six local government out of the twenty-three local governments in the state. While Snowball purposive sampling was employed to sample the participants from each of the selected local governments. The study has 120 participants as a sample size. Ethnographic research method was employed for the study as a research design. Two research questions were asked based on the objectives of the study. An open-ended Structured Questionnaire tagged Fulbe Marriage Rituals Inventory was used to interview each of the 120 respondents individually. Descriptive data analysis was employed to answer the research questions both quantitatively and qualitatively. The study finds out that there are certain non-linguistic rituals that are endangered due to the influence of modernity and cross breeding. In view of these findings, the study recommends that there is need to investigate the possible revival of the endangered non-linguistic aspect of Fulbe marriage in the study area that include chodiri, sharo, fijoji and doggal.

1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a worldwide practice, generally known to be a union between a man and a woman. Similarly, in Fulbe culture, marriage is one important aspect of life, which was celebrated with the expectation to be a lasting union between the husband and the wife. Fulbe consider marriage as a divine institution that ensures stronger, socio-economic, and political alliances of the couples. Consequently, in Fulbe communities, material rituals are highly placed before, during and after the marriage contract. The thrust of this study, therefore, is to document the endangered rituals of Fulbe marriage in Sokoto State. The term “Fulbe” is a designation describing speakers of Fulfulde in Africa and particularly in Nigeria where they have settlement in both towns and rural regions of Hausa land and other parts of Northern Nigeria. Mukoshy, described Fulbe as a

group of people that for a long period of time put strain into operation upon their culture and philosophy of life. This ability made them to develop a highly refined culture based on equity and respect to their social norms (Mukoshy, 2014). Marriage rituals in this study refer to material rites needed as prerequisite before and after Fulbe marriage is conducted. These rites include certain criteria that both suitors must satisfy and the step by step procedures that involve material and certain specific words that are evoked by male and female suitors and their families.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

The aim of the study is to document the marriage rituals of Fulbe in Sokoto State as the language is being endangered by the encroachment of the dominant culture of the study area. The basic problem of any endangered culture is the gradual adaptation of the culture of the dominant environment. This process leads to substitutions of both internal and external culture of the endangered language in favour of the dominant language. In view

of this, it is pertinent to mention here that, Fulbe in the study area seems to be increasingly assimilated by the dominant environment. This assimilation process does not end on the internal linguistic features of Fulfulde alone, but extended to external features of the language such as dressing and marriage rituals to mention but a few. Based on the stated problem of the encroachment of the dominant culture, this study decides to document the endangered rituals of Fulbe marriage in the study area.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to document the endangered material rituals of Fulbe marriage in the study area. The specific objectives of the study are to find out the endangered material rites no longer practiced in Fulbe marriage and why?

1.4 Research Question

The following two research questions were asked based on the objectives of the study:

1. What are the non-linguistics rites that are no longer practiced in Fulbe marriage?
2. Why are such non-linguistic rites no longer being practiced?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The most common marriage rituals among Fulbe are linguistic and material rituals in form of dowry and bride-wealth. The linguistic rites involve for instance in preferential marriage that is decided by parents of the suitors is for the girl's father to simply saying; "I give so-and-so (the girl) to so-and-so (the boy) until she reaches puberty", and the boy's father shows his appreciation and acceptance by handing over a bull (ngari kougal) to the girl's father as a token of espousal, the bull being slaughtered and eaten by the relatives. In another style, the father of the boy says, in effect; "Give me your daughter; I am going to 'marry' them", — to which the father of the daughter complies (de St. Croix, 1945)

After either of these linguistic rites, it is the custom for the boy's parents to send presents yearly at the time of festivals to the girl's family. These include a present of money for making the girl's hairdo, a special present given to the girl at these festivals, and kola-nuts in amounts which increase at each presentation. Also, on market-days the lad will give the girl small presents of two or three kola-nuts and some amount of money. The time of their marriage may be some six or seven years after betrothal depending on the family arrangements.

Fulbe being mostly pastoralists, cattle feature prominently in most of their festivals (Hampshire, 2004), consequently in the case of a grown man with cattle of his own, proposing a girl, cattle are named by the father or the guardian of the girl who may suggest certain heads of cattle. The bridegroom-to-be, or his representative rather, bargain the number of cattle to offer after some talk, a compromise of, say, three may be made. One large bull may take the place of, and be counted equal to, two small ones. In whichever way, the marriage is sealed in the presence of 'ardo' or 'maudo wuro' to whom the bridegroom owes allegiance and who may not live at that camp and some call a 'modibbo' from a nearby town if there is none in the tribe to bless the occasion (de St. Croix, 1945).

The best-known economic customs relating to marriage are dowry and bride wealth. Dowry is given to the woman from her parents as an advance on her inheritance, and it is hers, although often administered by her husband (Cohen, 1970). Dowry reflects the status of the woman at marriage, and a good dowry can gain a desirable husband. Bride-wealth, on the other hand, is paid to the bride's family. Dowry and bride-wealth, however, need not be mutually exclusive; a combination is often used. The ritualistic part of these arrangements involves visits and negotiations between the two sets of kin and sometimes special displays of the items (Goody, 1973).

A girl who has been engaged as a child may choose to refuse the lad to whom she has been affianced to after the marriage. However, Grayzel (1990) reports that it is only after marriage that a girl engaged as a child may attempt to free herself from a union which has not been her choice. de St. Croix (1945) explains that, in this case, the man of her choice must recompense the relatives of the disappointed youth for the bull which they handed over to the girl's father when the original betrothal took place. The husband-to-be will, however, give to the girl's parents a larger number of cattle as an 'espousal token'. It may be that this requirement is intended to deter others from seeking the hand of a girl who has already been betrothed; and or because the customary right of a party to the favoured marriages that is, of first cousins is violated; as compensation to the girl's family, by one who has not this right, for taking her out of the family group.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Ethnographic research method was employed for the study. The population of the study involves all the Fulbe in the 23 Local Governments areas of Sokoto state form the population of the study. However,

according to Hampshire (2004) It is very difficult to ascertain the estimate of Fulani due to their life pattern. However, according to Nigeria Population and Development Sokoto Fact Sheet (2017), the population of Sokoto state was estimated to be close to 5.4 million heads. Two sampling techniques were used in this study - Stratified and Snowball Purposive sampling techniques. Stratified sampling was used to sample six local governments out of the twenty-three local governments in the state. While Snowball purposive sampling was employed to sample the participants from each of the selected local governments.

The study has 120 participants as a sample size. This was in accordance with Cohen et al (2007) that a sample size of thirty participants is considered by many researchers as ideal sample size. Stratified sampling technique was employed to select two local government areas from each of the three senatorial zones of the state. The selected areas for the study include Tureta and Yabo Local Governments from Sokoto South Senatorial Zone; Binji, and Tangaza Local Governments from Sokoto Central Senatorial Zone and; Rabah and Wurno Local Government areas from Sokoto East Senatorial Zone of the state. A Questionnaire tagged *Fulbe Marriage Rituals Inventory* was used to interview each of the 120 respondents individually. Open-ended structure was employed in order to solicit adequate information from the respondents as against close-ended, which may not give desired and adequate information.

4.RESULTS

Research Question One

What are the non-linguistic rites of Fulbe marriage no longer practiced in the study area? To answer this research question, responses to questionnaire item number one and two presented in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively answer the research question. Item one of the questionnaire asked whether the participants know any non-linguistic aspect of Fulbe marriage no longer being practiced in the study area. The responses of the participants to the question are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Cardinal Responses on Some Non-Linguistic Rituals No Longer Practiced

Local Government	Yes	No	Total
Yabo	20	0	20
Wamakko	8	8	16
Tangaza	20	0	20
Tureta	16	2	18
Rabah	18	0	18
Wurno	16	2	18
Total	98	12	110

Table 1 reveals that 98 participants representing 81.7% across the six local governments responded positively that they know some aspects of non-linguistic Fulbe rites no longer practiced in their marriages in the study area. Yabo and Tangaza Local Governments have the highest frequency scores of 20 entries each. Rabah has 18 entries, while Tureta and Wurno Local government have 16 entries each. The answer to this research question therefore emerged that there are some aspects of Fulbe non-linguistics marriage rituals no longer practiced in the study area.

Item number two of the questionnaire explores further to know those aspects of Fulbe non-linguistic rituals no longer being practiced in the study area. Responses to item two of the questionnaire are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Non-Linguistic Rites of Fulbe Marriage No Longer Practiced

Local Govern ment	Cho diri	Fij oji	Sha ro	Dog gol	Tumb ude	Koug al kowo odi	Tot al
Yabo	17	1	0	2	0	0	20
Wamak ko	0	4	6	0	0	0	10
Tangaz a	15	1	2	0	1	1	20
Tureta	1	6	9	0	0	0	16
Rabah	8	5	1	4	0	0	18
Wurno	7	0	0	5	0	4	16
Total	48	17	18	11	1	5	100

Table 2 reveals that *Chodiri*, (a bull slaughtered for marriage) *sharo*, (public flogging) *fijoji* (games) and *doggol* (running away) with 48, 18 17 and 11 frequency entries respectively are some of the non-linguistic rites of Fulbe marriage no longer being practiced in the study area. According to Table 2 *Chodiri*, (a bull slaughtered for marriage) *sharo*, (public flogging) *fijoji* (Fulbe games) and *doggol* (running away) constitute some aspects of non-linguistic rites of Kougal Fulbe no longer practiced in the study area.

Research Question Two

Why are such non-linguistics rites no longer being practiced in the study area? Responses to questionnaire item number three presented in Table three answer the research question.

Table 3 Endangered Non-Linguistics Rites of Kougal Fulbe in The Study Area

Local Government	Zamanu	Addini	Hautugokabilaaji	Kowoda/riya	dulle re jond e jam	Total
Yabo	10	3	7	0	0	20
Wamakko	11	3	2	0	0	16
Tangaza	1	1	18	0	0	20
Tureta	7	0	3	5	1	16
Rabah	3	11	2	2	0	18
Wurno	2	3	2	11	0	18
Total	34	21	34	18	1	108

Table 3 reveals that *Zamanu*, (time) and *Hautugokabilaaji* (bred mix) emerged as the two major reasons why some non-linguistic rites of Kougal Fulbe were abandoned in the study area with 34 frequency entries each across the six local governments.

5. DISCUSSION

Responses to questionnaire item number one presented in Table 1 reveals that 98 participants representing 81.7% across the study area affirm that they know of some non-linguistic rites of Fulbe marriage no longer being practiced. Item two of the questionnaire further asked the participants for those material rites. Table 2 presents the responses of the participants and it reveals that *Chodiri*, *sharo*, *fijoji* and *doggol* are among the endangered non-linguistic rites of Fulbe marriage being endangered in the study area. This finding vindicates the justification of the study that certain cultures of Fulbe marriage have been endangered by the dominant linguistic community. The finding also breaks new ground by informing something new contrary to the norms in Fulbe marriage. It was however reported in the literature review that a girl who was betrothed as a child may decide to run away, but that must be after the first marriage decided by the parents (De St. Croix, 1945 & Hampshire, 2004).

The second finding is that *Zamanu*, (modernity) and *Hautugokabilaaji* (bred mix) emerged as the two major attributes why some non-linguistic rites of Kougal Fulbe were abandoned in the study area. Responses to questionnaire item number six presented in Table 3 reveals that *Zamanu* (modernity) and *Hautugokabilaaji* (bred mix) have 34 entries each respectively, with *addini* (religion) scoring only 21. This finding vindicates Hampshire (2004) that modernity has brought about different changes for different groups of Fulani. Also, Birkeland (2007)

noted that there are ongoing processes of violation to Fulbe endogamy marriage philosophy which is decided now based on what the husband possess in terms of wealth.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings of this study, the conclusion is that *Chodiri*, *sharo*, *fijoji* and *doggol* emerged as endangered Fulbe marriage rites as affirmed by the participants of the study. And *Zamanu*, (modernity) and *Hautugokabilaaji* (bred mix) were found as the two major attributes why some non-linguistic rites of Kougal Fulbe were abandoned in the study area.

Considering the objectives of this study, the following recommendations were made in line with the findings of the study:

1. There is need to investigate the possible revival of the four endangered non-linguistic of Fulbe marriage in the study area that include *chodiri*, *sharo*, *fijoji* and *doggol*.
2. Similarly, there is need to investigate the possibility of reversing the negative transformation of dominant culture creeping into the material rites of Fulbe marriage.

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