CONTEXTUAL COMMUNICATION OF THE GOSPEL TO PASTORAL FULBE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

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A Dissertation Presented to the
Faculty of the School of World Mission
And Institute of Church Growth
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Intercultural Studies

March 2000
ABSTRACT

Mogensen, Mogens Stensbæk

This dissertation analyzes the mission work of five Protestant churches among Muslim pastoral Fulbe (Fulani in English and Peuls in French) in seven Middle Belt states in Northern Nigeria. The study begins with a presentation of the theoretical framework for the research. The principles of effective contextual communication and the concepts of contextual conversions and contextual congregations are outlined.

In the analysis of the history and social organization of the pastoral Fulbe society in Northern Nigeria the most important factors that impact the communication of the gospel to Fulbe are identified, such as the central role of cattle and the impact of modernization. In the analysis of the religion and world view of the pastoral Fulbe three religious dimensions or structures are identified: Pulaaku (the traditional pre-Islamic religion of the Fulbe), Islam, and the religious structure of “spirits and magic.”

The history of Fulbe mission in Northern Nigeria and of the five mission projects is presented. The mission principles, approaches, and methods of the mission projects together with the spiritual journey of sixty Christian Fulbe from a pastoral background are analyzed on the basis of structured and unstructured interviews. The research shows that the Fulbe mission to a large extent has followed traditional non-contextual mission principles. Significant elements of contextual conversion are identified in the spiritual
journey of the converts, but the research concludes that the converts were excluded from their community and culture and not integrated in contextual congregations. Alternative models of contextual local congregations are developed and evaluated, and it is concluded that the Fulbe house fellowship model is the most feasible model in the pastoral Fulbe context in Northern Nigeria today.

The final chapter identifies the critical issues for the development of strategies for the contextual communication of the gospel to pastoral Fulbe. The study concludes with nineteen recommendations the most important of which are that all mission initiatives should be directed towards the goal of a contextual conversion, where the converts remain within their Fulbe culture and community and towards the goal of establishing contextual Fulbe congregations.
DEDICATION

Dedicated to the memory of

Bob Wandersee,

secretary of JCMWA

and missionary among Fulbe,

who was killed in Nigeria, August 27, 1998

and

Stephen Niyang,

media consultant of UBS

and external reader of this dissertation,

who died in a plane crash in the Ivory Coast, January 30, 2000
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am very grateful to my mentor, Viggo Søgaard, who initially encouraged me to embark on this study and who guided me through all the stages the Ph.D. program. I am also indebted to my committee members, Dean S. Gilliland and J. Dudley Woodberry, who provided valuable input for my dissertation.

My gratitude also goes to the five churches in Northern Nigeria, who were ready to co-operate with me in the research, and who sent some of their employees to be my research assistants.

- The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria
- The Christian Reformed Church in Nigeria
- The Church of Christ in Nigeria
- The Evangelical Church in West Africa
- The Nigerian Baptist Convention

I also appreciate the financial support from a number of churches, organizations, and foundations who made this study possible.

- Sudanmissionen (The Sudan United Mission, Danish Branch)
- The Lutheran World Federation
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- Jubilæumsfonden (The Jubilee Foundation), Denmark
- The Joint Christian Ministry in West Africa
- Den Evangelisk-Lutherske Frikirke (The Evangelical Lutheran Free Church), Norway
• L’Association Nationale des Églises Luthériennes á France (The National Association of Lutheran Churches in France)
• Lærernes Missionsforening (The Teachers’ Mission Organization), Denmark
• Statens Humanistiske Forskningsråd (The National Humanistic Research Council), Denmark

I want to especially to thank my wife, Karin, and our son, Anders, who have given me their unfailing support and continual encouragement, without which this project would not have been possible.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... ii  
DEDICATION ....................................................................................................................... iv  
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ......................................................................................................... v  
TABLE OF CONTENTS ........................................................................................................ vii  
LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................................... xiv  
LIST OF FIGURES ............................................................................................................... xvi  
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ................................................................................................... xviii  

CHAPTER 1 THE RESEARCH ISSUE .................................................................................... 1  
   Personal Background ........................................................................................................ 2  
   Problem Statement ........................................................................................................... 3  
   Purpose of the Study ......................................................................................................... 3  
   Research Questions .......................................................................................................... 3  
   Goal .................................................................................................................................. 4  
   Delimitations ...................................................................................................................... 4  
   Significance ....................................................................................................................... 5  

CHAPTER 2 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .................................................................... 7  
   Contextual Communication ............................................................................................. 7  
      Evangelism As Communication ...................................................................................... 7  
      Communication Principles ............................................................................................ 9  
      Contextualization and Communication ....................................................................... 18  
   Contextual Conversion ................................................................................................... 24  
      The Constants of Conversion ....................................................................................... 25  
      The Characteristics of a Contextual Conversion ............................................................. 27  
      A Decision Process Model ............................................................................................ 32  
   Contextual Congregations .............................................................................................. 34  
      The Signs of the True Church ....................................................................................... 34  
      The Characteristics of a Contextual Local Congregation .............................................. 40  
   Applying the Theoretical Concepts to the Research Process ........................................... 45
CHAPTER 3 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ...........................................47
Library and Archival Research .........................................................47
The Field Research ...........................................................................52
  Structured Interviews ...................................................................52
  Unstructured Interviews and In-Depth Interviews .........................54
  Delimitation and Sampling Plan ....................................................55
  Life Stories ....................................................................................58
Data Collection ..................................................................................62
Analysis of the Data ............................................................................63
Reliability and Validity .......................................................................64

CHAPTER 4 THE HISTORY AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF
THE PASTORAL FULBE SOCIETY .....................................................66
The History of Fulbe in Northern Nigeria ............................................67
  The Mythical Past ...........................................................................67
  The Period of Migrations ..............................................................70
  The Period of Ignorance 1450-1600 ...............................................70
  The Period of Trials 1650-1850 ......................................................70
  The Period of Islamic Rule 1809-1903 ............................................71
  The Colonial Period 1903-1960 ......................................................74
  The Period of Independence Beginning in 1960 .........................76
The Social Organization of the Pastoral Fulbe Society in Northern Nigeria ..77
Economics .........................................................................................79
  Fulbe Movements .........................................................................80
  Differentiation of Fulbe Societies ................................................82
    Nomadic Fulbe--Mbororo’en ......................................................83
    Semi-nomadic Fulbe ...............................................................83
  Sedentary Fulbe--Fulbe Siire .......................................................84
  Social Classes in Fulbe Societies ..................................................85
The Family .........................................................................................86
  Marriage .......................................................................................86
  The Household .............................................................................87
  Inheritance ...................................................................................88
Education ........................................................................................89
  Types of Education ......................................................................90
  The Five Life Stages ....................................................................91
Government (Decision Making) .......................................................93
  Authority Relations within the Family ........................................93
  Authority Relations in the Fulbe Community ................................95
Pastoral Fulbe under Pressure from the Modern Nigerian Society ........96
  The Land-Squeeze Syndrome .......................................................97
  Commercialization of Livestock Production ................................98
  Human and Animal Health Problems .........................................99
  Sedentarization ..........................................................................100
CHAPTER 5  THE RELIGION AND WORLDVIEW OF THE
PASTORAL FULBE .........................................................112

Islam .............................................................................113
  The Pillars of Islam ..................................................113
  Islamic Rites of Passage ...........................................118
  Religious Development: The Case of Oumarou Ndoudi ....124
  Tensions between Islamic Rites and Traditional Fulbe Concerns ......125
Spirits and Magic--Crisis Rites ........................................126
  Diseases and Accidents .............................................126
  Magic .........................................................................128
  Divination and Dreams .............................................130
  Spirit Possession ....................................................133
  Tensions between Spirits and Magic and Islam .....................135

Pulaaku ........................................................................136
  The Language of Pulaaku ........................................137
  The Ethical Code of Pulaaku ......................................139
  The Fertility Rites of Pulaaku .....................................142
  Tensions between Pulaaku and Islam ............................148
  The Worldview of the Pastoral Fulbe .............................150
Summary ........................................................................154

CHAPTER 6  HISTORY OF MISSION TO FULBE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA ......158

The Islam in Africa Project ..............................................158
Conservative Evangelical Mission Initiatives ......................161
  Fulbe Congregations in Dahomey and in Kwara State.........161
  New Life for All .....................................................165
  Fulbe Conferences ...................................................167
  Fulbe Mission Handbook ..........................................169
Ecumenical Mission Initiatives (The Lutherans) .................170
  Sawtu Linjiila .........................................................171
  The Establishment of the Joint Christian Ministry in West Africa ....174
The Achievements of JCMWA ........................................178
  Linear Ministry .....................................................181
  Community and Conversion ....................................182
  Spiritual Warfare ...................................................184
  Communicating with Non-Literates ..............................186
  Contextualization ...................................................187
  New Fulbe Mission Initiatives ...................................188
The History of the Five Fulbe Mission Projects ..................189
  The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria ......................189
  The Christian Reformed Church in Nigeria ....................192
  The Church of Christ in Nigeria ...................................195
### CHAPTER 7  AN ANALYSIS OF THE FIVE MISSION PROJECTS AND THEIR MISSION PRINCIPLES AND METHODS ................................................................. 204

- Demographic Data about the Mission Projects .......................................................... 204
- Mission Principles ...................................................................................................... 207
- The Goals for the Mission Projects ............................................................................. 209
- Mission Approaches .................................................................................................. 210
- Mission Methods and Media ...................................................................................... 213
  - The Awareness Phase ............................................................................................. 213
  - The Conversion Phase ............................................................................................ 217
  - The Incorporation Phase ....................................................................................... 218
- Summary of the Conclusions Concerning the Survey of the Mission Projects .... 219

### CHAPTER 8  AN ANALYSIS OF THE MOVEMENT TO CHRIST OF PASTORAL FULBE ................................................................. 223

- Demographic Information ......................................................................................... 223
  - Age, Sex, Marital Status, Clan, and Location .......................................................... 224
  - Time of Conversion ............................................................................................... 226
  - Geographical Mobility .......................................................................................... 231
  - Social Mobility ...................................................................................................... 233
- The Factors that Influenced the Spiritual Journey of Pastoral Fulbe .................. 234
  - The Awareness Phase ............................................................................................ 235
    - Mission Initiatives ............................................................................................... 235
    - Local Congregations and Individual Christians .................................................. 239
    - Contextual and Personal Factors ....................................................................... 240
  - The Conversion Phase ............................................................................................ 243
    - Mission Initiatives ............................................................................................... 244
    - Local Congregations and Individual Christians .................................................. 246
    - Contextual and Personal Factors ....................................................................... 247
  - The Incorporation Phase ........................................................................................ 251
    - Mission Initiatives ............................................................................................... 251
    - Local Congregations and Individual Christians .................................................. 253
    - Contextual and Personal Factors ....................................................................... 255
- The Response of the Pastoral Fulbe to the gospel .................................................. 257
  - Key Issues in the Christian Faith .......................................................................... 257
  - Relationship with the Christian Community ......................................................... 263
  - Relationship with the Fulbe Community .................................................................. 265
- Summary of Conclusions Resulting from the Survey of Fulbe Converts ............ 269
  - The Communicators and the Media Channels ....................................................... 269
  - The Context ........................................................................................................... 272
  - The Understanding of the Gospel ........................................................................ 272
The Result of the Interaction of the *Fulbe* with the Gospel....................273

CHAPTER 9  CONTEXTUAL CONVERSION ISSUES IDENTIFIED
THROUGH STUDY OF LIFE STORIES.............................................276

The *Qur’an* as a Bridge for Conversion ........................................277
The *Qur’an* in the Life Stories ..............................................277
    From the *Qur’an* to the Bible .........................................278
    From the Bible to the *Qur’an* ........................................279
The *Qur’an* and Contextual Conversion ......................................283
    The Need for Forgiveness of Sins ......................................283
    The *Qur’anic* Frame of Reference ..................................284
Conclusions Concerning the Missionary Use of the *Qur’an* ...............284

Dreams--A Divine Call to Conversion ......................................290
Dreams in the Life Stories ..................................................291
    Removal of Doubt about the Truth of Christianity ..............291
    Courage to Make a Decision ..........................................293
Dreams and Contextual Conversion .........................................296
    Dreams in the Bible ....................................................297
    Actualization of Religious Frames of Reference ..................298
    Contextual Communication in Situation of Need ..................299
    Dream-Approved Change .............................................300
Conclusions Concerning the Missionary Use of Dreams ......................301

Power Encounter and Prayer in Conversion ................................302
Power Encounter and Prayer in the Life Stories ...........................303
    Public Power Encounter .............................................304
    From the Power Sphere of Spirits and Magic to That of Jesus Christ ..............................................306
    Prayer .................................................................307
Power Encounter, Prayer, and Contextualization ..........................309
    The Felt Needs of Protection and Blessing .........................309
    Prayer and Magic ....................................................310
    Contextual Communication of the Gospel through the Ritual of Prayer .........................................................312
Conclusions Concerning the Missionary Use of Prayer ......................315
Summary ..................................................................................318

CHAPTER 10  TOWARDS CONTEXTUAL CONGREGATIONS..................322

The *Fulbe* Converts’ Encounter with the Traditional Non-*Fulbe* Local Congregations .........................................................322
Baptism ....................................................................................324
The Cause of Exclusion from the *Fulbe* Community .......................325
Sociological Issues .....................................................................328
Alternative Models of Contextual Local Congregations .................330
Sociological Parameters ..........................................................331
Six Models of Local Congregations ...........................................332
An Ecclesiological Evaluation of the Congregational Models..........................334
    Homogenous Unit Principle Congregations ........................................334
    Isa Muslim Congregations .............................................................336
    Underground Congregations .............................................................337
    House Fellowships .........................................................................339
Contextual Evaluation of the Congregational Models ...........................................340
    Critical Aspects of the Context ........................................................340
    Homogeneous Unit Principle Congregations ......................................341
    Fulbe Isa Muslim Congregations ......................................................342
    Fulbe Underground Congregations ..................................................343
    Fulbe House Fellowships .................................................................345
Summary ....................................................................................................348

CHAPTER 11 CRITICAL ISSUES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF
STRATEGIES FOR THE CONTEXTUAL COMMUNICATION OF
THE GOSPEL TO PASTORAL FULBE ..............................................................350
The Communicator, the Message and the Channel........................................351
Contextual Conversion ........................................................................353
Contextual Fulbe Congregations ............................................................354
Mission Priority .....................................................................................354
Cooperation with Local Congregations ....................................................355
Interdenominational Cooperation ..............................................................356
Islam ........................................................................................................357
Pulaaku ....................................................................................................357
Spirits and magic ....................................................................................358
Person-Based Approach ..........................................................................358
Bible-Based Approach ...........................................................................359
Prayer-Based Approach ..........................................................................360
Fulfulde Language-Based Approach ..........................................................360
Non-Literacy-Based Approach .................................................................361
Holistic Approach ..................................................................................363
Bypassing Church-Buildings .....................................................................363
Supernatural Encounters with God ............................................................365
Christian Fulbe Herders ..........................................................................365
Church-Planting Procedure ......................................................................367
Contextualization ....................................................................................368
Conclusion ..................................................................................................370

APPENDIX A QUESTIONNAIRE FOR IDENTIFYING MISSION
APPROACHES AND MISSION PRINCIPLES ..............................................372

APPENDIX B QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHRISTIAN FULBE: SPIRITUAL JOURNEY
AND SPIRITUAL DECISION ....................................................................377
APPENDIX C  DATA FROM QUESTIONNAIRE FOR IDENTIFYING MISSION APPROACHES AND MISSION PRINCIPLES ........................................390

APPENDIX D  DATA FROM QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHRISTIAN FULBE ..............396

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC, FULFULDE, AND HAUSA TERMS .................................410

REFERENCES CITED ...........................................................................................................416

INDEX ......................................................................................................................................440

VITA ........................................................................................................................................448
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1  CHRISTIAN *FULBE* IN NIGERIA .................................................................57
TABLE 2  POSITION OF RESPONDENTS IN RELATION TO THE MISSION PROJECT .................................................................205
TABLE 3  MISSIONARIES EMPLOYED IN THE MISSION PROJECTS ..........206
TABLE 4  MISSION PRINCIPLES BY PERCENTAGE .................................................208
TABLE 5  THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MEDIA IN THE AWARENESS PHASE BY PERCENTAGE ...............................................................214
TABLE 6  THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN THE AWARENESS PHASE BY PERCENTAGE ...............................................................216
TABLE 7  THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRISTIAN ACTIVITIES IN THE AWARENESS PHASE BY PERCENTAGE ...............................................................217
TABLE 8  THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA IN THE AWARENESS PHASE BY PERCENTAGE ...............................................................238
TABLE 9  THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIAN ACTIVITIES IN THE AWARENESS PHASE BY PERCENTAGE ...............................................................239
TABLE 10 THE INFLUENCE OF LOCAL CONGREGATIONS AND INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS IN THE AWARENESS PHASE BY PERCENTAGE ...............................................................240
TABLE 11 THE INFLUENCE OF CONTEXTUAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCES IN THE AWARENESS PHASE BY PERCENTAGE ...............................................................241
TABLE 12 THE NEGATIVE INFLUENCE OF MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN IDEAS AND PRACTICES IN THE AWARENESS PHASE BY PERCENTAGE ...............................................................242
TABLE 13  THE INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA IN THE CONVERSION PHASE BY PERCENTAGE .................................................................244
TABLE 14  THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIAN ACTIVITIES IN THE CONVERSION PHASE BY PERCENTAGE ..................................................245
TABLE 15  THE INFLUENCE OF THE LOCAL CONGREGATIONS AND INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS IN THE CONVERSION PHASE BY PERCENTAGE ..................................................................................246
TABLE 16  THE INFLUENCE OF CONTEXTUAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCES IN THE CONVERSION PHASE BY PERCENTAGE ..................................................................................248
TABLE 17  THE NEGATIVE INFLUENCE OF MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN IDEAS AND PRACTICES IN THE CONVERSION PHASE BY PERCENTAGE ..................................................................................249
TABLE 18  THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA IN THE INCORPORATION PHASE BY PERCENTAGE ...........................................................................252
TABLE 19  THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN THE INCORPORATION PHASE BY PERCENTAGE ...........................................................................252
TABLE 20  THE INFLUENCE OF LOCAL CONGREGATIONS AND INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS IN THE INCORPORATION PHASE BY PERCENTAGE ..................................................................................253
TABLE 21  THE NEGATIVE INFLUENCE OF MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN IDEAS AND PRACTICES IN THE INCORPORATION PHASE BY PERCENTAGE ..................................................................................256
TABLE 22  RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION ......369
LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1    COMPREHENSIVE MODEL OF COMMUNICATION PROCESS .....15
FIGURE 2    MODEL FOR ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION
OF THE GOSPEL ........................................................................17
FIGURE 3    DECISION PROCESS MODEL ........................................32
FIGURE 4    AGE OF *FULBE* RESPONDENTS .................................225
FIGURE 5    NUMBER OF YEARS SINCE THE RESPONDENTS’ INITIAL
INTEREST IN THE GOSPEL..............................................................227
FIGURE 6    NUMBER OF YEARS SINCE BAPTISM OF RESPONDENTS......228
FIGURE 7    AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS AT THE TIME OF THEIR
INITIAL INTEREST IN THE GOSPEL..................................................229
FIGURE 8    NUMBER OF YEARS BETWEEN RESPONDENTS’ INITIAL
INTEREST IN THE GOSPEL AND THEIR BAPTISM.........................230
FIGURE 9    LOCATION OF THE RESPONDENTS WHEN THEY FIRST
BECAME INTERESTED IN THE GOSPEL .............................................231
FIGURE 10   PRESENT LOCATION OF THE RESPONDENTS ........................232
FIGURE 11   PRESENT OCCUPATION OF THE RESPONDENTS ..................234
FIGURE 12   THE RESPONDENTS’ FEELINGS ABOUT JESUS ..................259
FIGURE 13   THE RESPONDENTS’ CONVICTIONS ABOUT
THE SCRIPTURES .............................................................................260
FIGURE 14   THE RESPONDENTS’ FEELINGS ABOUT THE SCRIPTURES ......261
FIGURE 15   THE RESPONDENTS’ BEHAVIOR WITH THE SCRIPTURES........262
FIGURE 16   THE RESPONDENTS’ FEELING OF ACCEPTANCE BY
FAMILY AND RELATIVES AFTER CONVERSION ..............................267
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AACC</td>
<td>The All African Council of Churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABF</td>
<td><em>Akin Bishara cikin Fulani</em> (Evangelism Work among <em>Fulbe</em>), the <em>Fulbe</em> Evangelism Department of CRCN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALC</td>
<td>The American Lutheran Church, now part of ELCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMS</td>
<td>The Church Missionary Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COCIN</td>
<td>The Church of Christ in Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>The Christian Reformed Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRCN</td>
<td>The Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECWA</td>
<td>The Evangelical Church in West Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EELC</td>
<td>L’Église Évangélique Lutherienne du Cameroun (The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELCA</td>
<td>The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELWA</td>
<td>Eternal Love Winning Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>The Evangelical Missionary Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EYN</td>
<td><em>Ekklesiyar ‘Yan’Uwar a Nigeria</em> (The Brethren Church in Nigeria)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUP</td>
<td>The Homogenous Unit Principle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAP</td>
<td>The Islam in Africa Project (later called PROCMURA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCMWA</td>
<td>The Joint Christian Ministry in West Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMMK</td>
<td><em>Kungiyar Makiyayi Mai Kyau</em> (The Good Shepherd’s Fellowship), Congregational <em>Fulbe</em> Evangelism Groups in LCCN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>KYBF</td>
<td><em>Kungiyar Yada Bishara ga Fulani</em> (The Fellowship for Evangelizing the Fulbe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCCN</td>
<td>The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCN</td>
<td>The Lutheran Church of Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LWF</td>
<td>The Lutheran World Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>The Nigerian Baptist Convention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLFA</td>
<td>New Life For All (in Hausa known as <em>Sabon Rai Don Kowa</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMS</td>
<td>The Norwegian Missionary Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROCURA</td>
<td>The Project for Christian Muslim Relations in Africa (formerly known as IAP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RVOG</td>
<td>Radio Voice of the Gospel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIM</td>
<td>The Sudan Interior Mission (later changed to the Society for International Ministries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SL</td>
<td><em>Sawtu Linjiila</em> (Voice of the Gospel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUM</td>
<td>The Sudan United Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUM-D</td>
<td>The Sudan United Mission, Danish Branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEKAN</td>
<td><em>Tarayyar Ekklesiyyin Krista A Nigeria</em> (Federation of Churches of Christ in Nigeria)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCC</td>
<td>The World Council of Churches</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
THE RESEARCH ISSUE

The Fulbe\(^1\) people are one of the largest and most widely dispersed ethnic groups in West Africa. The approximately more than fifteen million *Fulbe* are found in countries from Senegal to the Central African Republic, but about half live in Northern Nigeria.\(^2\) When they first appeared on the West African scene around the Senegal river more than a thousand years ago, they were all shepherds, who depended entirely on cattle and other animals for their livelihood. Over the last one thousand years, the *Fulbe* nomads have moved eastward along the great rivers, and they are now found in the Savanna belt, which extends throughout West Africa. Many are still nomads, some semi-nomads, whereas others have settled down and have become farmers or have taken up other occupations.

A group of *Fulbe* was among the first people south of the Sahara to become Muslims around A.D. 1000. After a millennium of interaction with Islam, the *Fulbe* people are today considered to be a Muslim people. From the *Fulbe* have come some of the most fervent propagators of Islam in West Africa.

---

\(^1\) *Fulbe* (plural of *Pulho*) is the name of the people in their own language, *Fulfulde*. They are called *Fulani* or *Filani* in Hausa, *Fulani* in English, and *Peuls* in French. In this study we follow the orthography of the *Adamawa Fulfulde*, which was used in the translation of the Bible *Deftere Allah* (1983).

\(^2\) In 1978, C. Edward Hopen estimated the total number of *Fulbe* in West Africa to be twelve million, three to four million of which were settled (1978:134). The number of *Fulfulde* speakers in Nigeria was estimated by the Wycliffe Bible Translators to be 7,611,000 in 1991 (Grimes 1992:344).
Only much more recently have the *Fulbe* people begun to interact with Christianity. When the modern missionary movement reached the Savanna belt towards the end of the last century, the focus of the mission was on the animistic ethnic groups. One example of this is the Sudan United Mission (SUM), which worked in Nigeria and Cameroon. According to the mission pioneer, Karl Kumm, the whole *raison d’être* of the SUM was “to counteract the Moslem advance among the pagan tribes in the Benue region. This cannot be done by going to the Mohammedans, and therefore our work will lie among the pagan tribes” (Boer 1979:115).

Only in the 1960s, when the attitude of the churches and mission agencies had begun to change, were the first mission initiatives taken to share the gospel with the *Fulbe*. Over the last twenty years, an increasing number of churches and mission agencies have become involved in mission to *Fulbe*, but today the number of Christians among the *Fulbe* is still extremely small.

**Personal Background**

When my wife and I came to Nigeria in 1982 as missionaries, sent by the Danish Lutheran branch of the Sudan United Mission (SUM-D), we were first involved in Christian education in the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN). In 1986, we were called to join the LCCN mission project among *Fulbe*, and for the following five years we worked together with Nigerian and Danish missionaries in a holistic ministry among the *Fulbe*. We soon noted that the few *Fulbe*, often young men, who became Christians all faced intense pressure from their Muslim family and neighbors, which led to their expulsion from the *Fulbe* community. At the same time, these *Fulbe* converts found it difficult to be satisfactorily integrated into the Christian community. Most likely it has been due to these hardships that some of the first converts have returned to the Islamic faith of their *Fulbe* community.
As a missionary and later as the general secretary in SUM-D, I have had to struggle with this problem, which is well known by all missions working among Muslims. This problem forms the background for this study.

**Problem Statement**

The issue to be addressed in this study is how we may develop strategies of contextual communication of the gospel to the Muslim *Fulbe* in Northern Nigeria that will facilitate an increase in the number of *Fulbe* who not only become Christians, but also become well integrated in some form of local Christian congregation without losing contact with their *Fulbe* community.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to analyze mission approaches used by *Fulbe* mission projects and evaluate the movement to Christ among pastoral *Fulbe* in order to develop guidelines for selecting mission approaches that will be appropriate to the pastoral *Fulbe* context in Northern Nigeria.

**Research Questions**

1. What characteristics of the *Fulbe* society, religion, and worldview are of greatest significance for mission to pastoral *Fulbe*?

2. Which approaches have been applied by selected mission projects in their communication of the gospel to pastoral *Fulbe*, and how have the pastoral *Fulbe* responded to the gospel?

3. What are the characteristics of a contextual conversion and of contextual congregations in a pastoral *Fulbe* context?
4. What are the critical issues to be considered for the development of strategies for effective contextual communication of the gospel to pastoral *Fulbe* in Northern Nigeria?

**Goal**

The goal is to develop guidelines for the selection of mission approaches that will be feasible in the pastoral *Fulbe* context in Northern Nigeria. The mission approaches selected are intended to lead to contextual conversions and to the establishment of contextual local congregations for the pastoral *Fulbe*.

**Delimitations**

The geographical scope of this study is the Middle Belt states of Northern Nigeria. Historically, most of Northern Nigeria belonged to one political unit, namely the Sokoto caliphate established by Shehu Usman Dan Fodio at the beginning of the 19th Century. Even today, all the states in Northern Nigeria have many socio-cultural features in common. The Middle Belt is the southern part of Northern Nigeria where Islam is not dominant, but where there are significant Christian populations, in some cases even a Christian majority.

This study will deal only with the pastoral *Fulbe*, that is the nomadic and semi-nomadic *Fulbe* and those settled *Fulbe* who depend on cattle for their livelihood. The settled *Fulbe* farmers and the urban *Fulbe*, including the *Torodbe Fulbe*, whose ancestors were the leaders of the jihad at the beginning of the 19th century, will only be included in this study insofar as they have influenced the life of the pastoral *Fulbe*. While the pastoral *Fulbe* have kept more to themselves, living with their cattle in the bush and the villages, and thus have maintained much of their traditional culture, the other *Fulbe* groups have mixed with the Hausa people to the extent that it is today sometimes difficult to distinguish these *Fulbe* from the Hausa.
From among all mission projects related to pastoral *Fulbe* in Northern Nigeria, I have selected the five projects considered to be the most important. They are the mission projects of the following churches: LCCN, the Christian Reformed Church in Nigeria (CRCN), the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN), the Evangelical Church in West Africa (ECWA), and the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC).³

**Significance**

This study will be significant for me personally as well as for SUM-D and LCCN. Hopefully, this study will point to solutions to some of the problems we have struggled with in trying to share the gospel with pastoral *Fulbe*. Through this study, I expect that guidelines for increasing the effectiveness of our *Fulbe* mission projects and for setting up new *Fulbe* mission projects in other parts of West Africa will emerge.

Since most *Fulbe* mission projects experience similar problems, this study will be of importance for all those involved in mission to *Fulbe*. Through the Joint Christian Ministry in West Africa (JCMWA),⁴ the results might be made available to all those churches and missions involved in mission to *Fulbe* in West Africa.

It is expected that this study will contribute to the development of missiological thinking concerning mission to Muslims. Together with similar studies being carried out among other Muslim people groups in Africa and Asia, this study will hopefully lead to

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³ For more details about the delimitation of the study, see Chapter 3.

⁴ JCMWA is an international networking organization that was set up in 1979 in order to inspire and coordinate mission among *Fulbe* in West Africa (see Chapter 6).
the development of some principles and guidelines for effective contextual communication of the gospel to Muslims.
CHAPTER 2

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Before beginning the research of the Fulbe mission, the theoretical framework for the investigation must be established. First, I will develop the principles for effective communication of the gospel and outline my understanding of contextual communication. In that process, a model of communication that will be used to analyze the work of selected mission projects and the movement to Christ of pastoral Fulbe will be presented. Then, I will discuss the goals of a contextual communication of the gospel, which I consider to be contextual conversions and contextual congregations.

Contextual Communication

When evangelism is considered communication, the perspectives from communicational research may be used to analyze the elements. Over the last three decades, missiologists have increasingly emphasized the critical importance of context for our understanding of the gospel. In this section, I will therefore apply insights of contextualization to the communication of the gospel by outlining what I understand contextual communication to be.

Evangelism As Communication

The theological basis for the mission of the church is the dynamic relationship between God and the world, culminating in God’s self-communication in Jesus Christ.
The universal church and individual local churches have come into being as a result of the mission of God in the world (missio dei). The mission of the church is understood only as participation in the missio dei (Bosch 1992:389-391). Since God’s mission is ultimately undefinable, the mission of the church cannot strictly defined. We may, however, conclude,

Mission includes evangelism as one of its essential dimensions. Evangelism is the proclamation of salvation in Christ to those who do not believe in him, calling them to repentance and conversion, announcing forgiveness of sin and inviting them to become living members of Christ’s earthly community and to begin a life of service to others in the power of the Holy Spirit (Bosch 1992:10-11).

Following David J. Bosch, I will therefore define evangelism as communication of the gospel with the goal of the conversion and the incorporation of the converts into local congregations. Instead of using Bosch’s term “proclamation,” which normally is understood as a verbal announcement, I will use the term “communication,” as it better expresses the dynamics of evangelism. The word communication is here used in the broadest sense as “all the procedures by which one mind may affect another” (Søgaard 1993:30). Communication, therefore, involves not only spoken and written words, but all signs and all actions that communicate messages that impact the receptor.

The communication process, however, looks different from different perspectives. From the perspective of the communicator (i.e., the five mission projects), the communication of the gospel involves all the activities carried out by the mission projects with the aim of converting and incorporating the pastoral Fulbe. From the perspective of the receptors (i.e., the pastoral Fulbe), the communication of the gospel involves the above, as well as all other activities from other communicators of the gospel that affect their conversion and incorporation.

The mission among pastoral Fulbe in Northern Nigeria has consisted of more than evangelism alone; it has included social services for the betterment of the life of the
**Fulbe.** Since it is “indicative of a false anthropology and sociology to divorce the spiritual or the personal sphere from the material and social” (Bosch 1992:10), the communication of the gospel through evangelistic activities should not be separated from social services; they are part of the total communication of the gospel. In my evaluation of the communication of the gospel to the Fulbe, however, I will only look at the impact of this communication in terms of conversion and incorporation into local congregations.

**Communication Principles**

Communication is one of the characteristics of human beings. To communicate means to reach out to other people across the gap that separates us in order to establish a “commonness.” The central problem in communication, therefore, is “how to achieve understanding across differences, no matter what causes them” (Smith 1992:7).

God, in whose image human beings are created, is a communicating God. He wants to make himself known to human beings and to be understood so that human beings may respond to his offer of salvation and have their relationship with God re-established (Søgaard 1993:11-14). The unique task entrusted to the church is the participation in God’s communication to the world. The church and individual Christians are called to represent God and to communicate his message to people (Jn. 20:21; Mt. 28:18-20).

In one sense, communication of the gospel is similar to all other forms of communication. In this regard, the gospel is comparable to any other message that a communicator wants to communicate to a receptor. Therefore, we may learn from all sound principles of communication theory for our communication of the gospel.

In another sense, Christian communication is a spiritual work. Ultimately, the communicator of the gospel is God who uses his church and individual Christians to communicate the gospel. God, in his sovereignty, also communicates with human beings...
in ways other than through his people. Apart from ordinary hindrances to effective
communication, we have to reckon with the opposing forces--the powers of evil and the
fallen nature of human beings--all of which work toward separating human beings from
God and his message. In the communication of the gospel, the communicator is
dependent on the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit controls the whole communication
process, and only he has the power to create faith in the heart of the receptor. Due to the
nature of the communication of the gospel, the Christian communicator should focus on
employing sound principles of communication to help the receptor understand the
message correctly. At the same time the communicator must commit himself/herself to
God in prayer, trusting him for guidance and power in all phases of the communication
process (Søgaard 1993:21-23).

In the following, those communication principles most significant to the purpose
of this study will be outlined. Based on these principles, a communication model will be
developed to be used in analyzing the communication of the gospel to pastoral Fulbe in
Northern Nigeria.

1. Effective communication is a personal interaction between the communicator
and the receptor. David Augsburger has pointed out that “Communication is co-
response-ability” (Augsburger n.d. as quoted in Smith 1992:25). Similarly, Donald K.
Smith has emphasized that “Communication takes place only when there is involvement”
(1992:23). Effective communication presupposes a mutual relationship in which the
communicator not only endeavors to make himself/herself and his/her message
understood by the receptor, but also strives to understand the receptor and his/her
response as well (Smith 1992:27-29).

Charles H. Kraft has pointed to the personalness of God’s communicational
strategy, which should characterize all Christian communication. “Incarnation--personal
participation in the lives of his receptors--is his constant method. And as in all life-
changing communication, the person (whether God himself in Christ or another person as God’s representative) is a major component of the message conveyed” (1991a:17).

The personalness of Christian communication has to do with the relational nature of the message. God wants to establish a relationship with human beings through his communication; likewise, Christian communicators of the gospel want to include the receptors in their fellowship with God and with one another in the church. Therefore, “communicators who seek to present a message recommending a relationship must model the relationship they recommend if their message is to be effective. Thus, communicators of Christianity are a more essential part of the message they communicate than a communicator of nonrelational kinds of information” (Kraft 1991a:18).

2. Effective communication presupposes a thorough knowledge of the receptor by the communicator. In the communication process the role of the receptor is as crucial as that of the communicator. “Receptors are active, even when they seem to be ‘just sitting there.’ They are not simply passive recipients of whatever is sent their way. They interact in a transactional process in which the results are negotiated on the spot rather than predetermined” (Kraft 1991a:67).

When the communicator has encoded his/her message and it reaches the receptor through the channel selected by the communicator, the receptor starts decoding the message. This is a selective filtering process, which includes the following four stages: exposure, attention, comprehension, and retention. It is the receptor who gives meaning to the message and, based on his/her understanding of it and its relevance to his/her situation, then responds to the message.

Therefore, the communicator has to endeavor to get to know the receptor. The answers to questions such as “Who is the receptor? Where is he/she? What are the needs of the receptor?” will then help the communicator to give his/her message a format and to
select the media that are appropriate for the situation of the receptor (Søgaard 1993:43-45, 97-99; Kraft 1979a:148).

3. Effective communication requires that the communicator has a clear goal for the communication of his/her message. Communication is initiated by a communicator in order to influence a receptor with a message, which has an intended content and an intended response. Therefore, the purpose of communication is to create the intended understanding of the content of the message, which in turn leads to the intended response. With a clear goal in mind, the communicator will be able to select the content of the message and the media through which the message is communicated to the receptor. Furthermore, clear measurable goals will make it possible for the communicator to evaluate the effectiveness of his/her communication (Smith 1992:2ff; Søgaard 1993:41-43).

From a Christian perspective, goals may be considered statements of faith that delineate what we believe God wants to bring about through our (and his) communication of the gospel. The purpose of evangelism, which is one of the essential dimensions of God’s mission in the world, is to communicate the gospel so that people may understand it and respond through conversion and incorporation into local congregations.

4. The selection of channels for the communication of the message is critical for the receptor’s perception of the message. No human communication is possible except through the use of verbal or non-verbal signal systems. These signal systems may either be used in a face-to-face communication situation, or they may be used in media, which, in the terminology of Marshall McLuhan (1964), are extensions of the human body and the basic human communication symbols. All messages have to be encoded in one or more of these signal systems.

Smith lists the following twelve systems: verbal, written, numeric, pictorial, audio, artifactual, kinesic, optical, tactile, spatial, temporal, and olfactory (1992:146).
In order to communicate his/her message effectively, the communicator also needs to know the culture of the receptor, since the use of various communication channels varies significantly from one culture to another. The communicator should select and shape the communication channels according to the receptors context, experience, and preference (Smith 1992:19). Furthermore, the communicator should be aware of which paramessages certain signal systems and media may convey along with the main message. Such unintended paramessages may overshadow the main message and influence the receptors understanding and response in a negative way. Communicating the gospel through literacy-based media in a predominantly non-literate society, for example, may convey the message that Christianity is a religion only for those who have learned to read and write.

5. Effective communication is not just an event, but a process or a series of events. Seen from the perspective of the communicator, it is “a consecutive, interrelated number of communication processes, some of short-term duration, others involving years, which are going on at the same time” (Søgaard 1993:30-31). Seen from the perspective of the receptor, communication takes place as the receptor moves through the various stages of his/her life.

The implication of this for the Christian communicator is, as Viggo Søgaard has pointed out,

Our communication messages must be designed as a process that corresponds to the needs of a receptor at his or her present position or stage in life and the needs and problems faced at that time. A person’s relationship with God can be seen as a spiritual journey and if we know a person’s position in this journey, we can design communication events that will be relevant at this time (1993:31).

6. Effective communication takes into account the context, which influences all aspects of the communication process. Since the purpose of communication is to create a correct understanding in the receptor and meaning is so intimately related to the context
of the receptor, context has to be considered as a factor in each dimension of the communication process. This is particularly in cross-cultural communication. The social context also plays a significant role in a receptor’s response to the message, since the action taken or conviction expressed by the receptor often affects the receptor’s relationship to his/her community.

The context, however, does not always hinder effective communication; it at times actually enhances the understanding of and response to the message. The challenge for the communicator, therefore, is to study the context of the receptor so that his/her communication is not disrupted by contextual factors (Kraft 1991a:129-141; Hesselgrave 1990:36). Specific principles for an effective contextual communication of the gospel will be outlined in the following section.

A variety of models explaining the communication process have been published. Søgaard’s “Comprehensive Model of Communication Process” (Figure 1) illustrates the dynamics of communication and helps the communicator to identify step by step the dimensions involved in effective communication.

The Christian communicator is the sender, who has a message to proclaim. The first step in the communication process is for the communicator to consider his/her purpose and the basic principles for the communication, as well as his/her resources (1). The next step is to identify the audience, the receivers,--who are they, and what are their needs and interests (2). Since the context of the audience influences its reception of the message, the communicator has to adapt his/her way of communicating to the context (3).

In order for the communicator to be able to communicate effectively with the audience, he/she has to carry out formal or informal research of the needs of the audience and its situation (4). Based on an understanding of the audience’s needs, the communicator may select the content of his/her message from the Scripture (5). Then the
A critical aspect of the communication process is the reception of the message by the audience. Here the communicator should consider the contextual factors that may influence the audience’s exposure to, attention to, and comprehension of the message (7). After completing the above, the communicator can formulate the message to be communicated to the audience in the channel selected (8).

While the communication is occurring, the communicator will monitor the process and evaluate the results of the communication (9). Communication is always a two-way system in which it is crucial for the communicator to be attentive to the response of the audience. Through research, the communicator should measure the results to discover if he/she has reached the goals of the communication (10).
Throughout the communication process the communicator must be aware of the communicational noise, that is, the hindrances to effective communication. The noise may be in the sender, the channel, or the context. The sources of noise must be identified and dealt with (Søgaard 1996:42-47).

For the purpose of this study, the following simplified model of communication has been developed to reflect the basic principles described above and to identify the elements that will be used in this analysis. Within this simplified model (Figure 2), the triangular flow highlights the three basic elements in any communication process: the communicator, the channel, and the receptor. Communication is an interaction through a channel between the communicator and the receptor. The meaning of the message in the mind of the communicator is not necessarily identical to the understanding of the message in the mind of the receptor. Similarly, the response of the receptor to the message is not necessarily identical to the intended effect that the communicator had in mind. Finally, the model illustrates that communication takes place within a context, which influences all aspects of the communication process.

This model may be used to present an overview of the communicational interaction of pastoral Fulbe with the gospel and the church. The communication situation with the Fulbe may be summarized like this: the mission projects are the communicators, and the receptors are the pastoral Fulbe. Based on their understanding of the Fulbe receptors and the Fulbe context, the mission projects encode the gospel in messages and select media or other channels through which the messages are transmitted to the Fulbe. On the basis of their understanding, some Fulbe respond by converting to Christ and by becoming members of local congregations. The context of the pastoral Fulbe and the context of the church influence all aspects of the communication process.
This model will later be used to analyze the basic elements in the communication of the gospel to pastoral Fulbe. The elements of the communication process will be described, and an attempt will be made to explain the process. Finally, the model will be used to identify critical issues for the development of strategies for the contextual communication of the gospel to pastoral Fulbe.
Contextualization and Communication

Contextualization is an effort to express the relevance of the gospel in the context of people, while at the same time being faithful to the text of the gospel.\(^2\) Today, contextualization is not seen as an option but as a necessity by both evangelical and ecumenical missiologists because contextualization is understood to have its origin in the *missio dei*. The Bible presents God as a communicating God, a God who wants to make himself known to people. God wants to communicate with people with impact, for the salvation of people. God’s interaction with humankind reached its climax in the incarnation, which may be called the ultimate form of contextualization. God calls his people to participate in his mission in the world in an incarnational way, that is, in a contextual way.

In spite of the general agreement about the necessity of contextualization and the common understanding of contextualization as related to the incarnation, the purpose, the nature, the scope, and the methods of contextualization have been understood quite differently by various missiologists.\(^3\) Since this research deals with contextualization, it is important to understand the different interpretations.

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\(^2\) In the first issue of the journal *Gospel in Context* (1978), Charles R. Taber in his challenging article “Is There More Than One Way to Do Theology?” suggests an alternative to the traditional way of doing theology. He advocates the development of a contextual theology that will lead to “a formulation of our faith which is at once true to the deepest intentions of the inspired writers, and which is also deeply relevant and compelling for people in today’s vastly different world” (1978:7). Dean S. Gilliland expresses the same basic understanding when he points to the apostle Paul’s contextual mission. “Paul’s call to the gentiles was a call to contextualize the gospel. It demanded faithfulness to the central Word of truth and openness to the uniqueness of each situation” (1989b:70).

\(^3\) The conservative evangelical missiologists David J. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen see the different versions of contextualization as products of different basic theological orientations. Whereas liberalism leads to a syncretistic contextualization, and neo-liberalism and neo-orthodoxy to a prophetic contextualization, orthodoxy leads to an apostolic contextualization (1992:144-157). The Catholic missiologist Stephen B. Bevans (1994), on the other hand, differentiates between models of contextualization on the basis of the various ways in which missiologists combine the sources of theology (*loci theologici*): scripture, tradition, culture, and social change. He then ends up with the following models: the translation model, the anthropological model, the praxis model, the synthetic model, and the transcendental model. Both of these categorizations are based on the theological starting points of contextual theology, but for the purposes of this study it is more relevant to analyze models of contextualization in view of their primary purposes. Building upon the work of Louis Luzbetak, Van Engen distinguishes between communication models, cultural relevance models, socio-economic change models, and inter-faith dialogue models (1989:76-77).
communication of the gospel, a model of contextualization that emphasizes the communicational aspect is most relevant. My understanding of contextualization, presented in the following points, is influenced by the contextual communication model developed by Kraft in his book *Christianity in Culture* (1979a).

1. Contextual communication is faithful to the text. To know what it means to be faithful to the text, we must develop an understanding of the biblical text. My understanding of the biblical text follows the model developed by Kraft called “the Bible as inspired classic casebook.”

The Bible, then, is seen as an inspired collection of classic cases from history . . . exemplifying certain of God’s past interactions with human beings for the instruction and guidance of those who now seek to follow in their footsteps. . . . This model simply speaks to the fact that the Scriptures are a collection of ‘classic’ materials (i.e., time-tested and found to be of enduring value) that were produced for particular people at particular times and places. When there is in the Bible historical and theological systematization (as there frequently is) it is done with the particular target audience and situation in mind. Each document is a specific presentation (a case study) dealing with the problems and participants in a specific context (1979a:398).

According to this understanding of the Bible, human beings today, each in his/her own context, are called to have dynamic interactions with God similar to the ones between God and the biblical persons described in the biblical textbook (Kraft 1979a:207). Since we do not have one “pure” culture-free gospel, but a gospel inculturated by a variety of cultures, we would not be faithful to the text if we simply copied the theology and church structures from the first century congregations in Greece, or imposed our Western understanding of the text on people in another culture. Faithfulness to the text, then, lies in encouraging people today in the midst of their context to have interactions with God that lead to faith allegiance to God like those we find in the biblical text (Gilliland 1989a:12).
2. Contextual communication is relevant to the context. In the words of Charles R. Taber, to communicate the gospel in a way that is relevant in the context involves an “effort to understand and take seriously the specific context of each human group and person on its own terms and in all its dimensions--cultural, religious, social, political, economic--and to discern what the gospel says to people in that context” (1979:146).

Taber elaborates on what it means to relate the gospel to specific contexts.

What usable concepts and symbols does this religion provide for the approach of the gospel, on the analogy of Paul’s use of the Athenian “unknown god?” What genuine insights does it offer into the character, activity and will of God? What are its gaps, its errors, its distortions? What particular obstacles does it place in the way of a true understanding of the gospel? It is on the basis of such an analysis that contextualization tries to discover in the Scriptures what God is saying to these people. In other words, contextualization takes very seriously the example of Jesus in the sensitive and careful way he offered each person a gospel tailored to his or her own context (1979:146).

3. Contextual communication is receptor-oriented. In order for the receptor to understand the message of the communicator accurately, the communicator and the receptor have to operate within the same frame of reference.4 A communicator, therefore, must choose whether his/her communication will take place within his/her own frame of reference or within the frame of reference of the receptor. In contextual communication, the communicator is the one to make the adjustments to the context of the receptor by adopting the frame of reference of the receptor. If the gospel is not communicated in this receptor-oriented way, which Kraft calls the identificational approach, the alternative may be an extractionist approach, which at times projects the gospel as foreign to the culture and extracts those who respond to it from their culture (Kraft 1979a:147-155; 1991a:15-16).

4 The term “frame of reference,” according to Kraft, “refers to the culture, language, life situation, social class, or similar all-embracing setting or context within which one operates” (1991a:15).
4. Contextual communication recognizes and addresses both the sacramental and the sinful and demonic aspects of the context. Behind this approach to the context lies an emphasis on the fact that the world is the creation of God. Although God’s creation, including human beings, has been tainted by sin, human beings are still made in the image of God, and God’s footprints are still visible in every context. Each context has a sacramental nature, because, as Luther expresses it, the world is God’s mask and God’s word.

God is already at work in all contexts. Missionaries do not introduce Christ into new contexts; Christ is already present in every context through the Holy Spirit, even though he may not yet be known and worshipped in every context. Part of the work of contextualization is identifying the presence of God in the context. We can confidently look for redemptive analogies and points of contact with the gospel in all religions and cultures, and, therefore, the gospel can be expressed in cultural forms understood and appreciated by the members of that society.

At the same time, each context is part of the fallen world, so the devil is also at work in every context. This means that there is both good and bad, both divine and demonic elements in every culture. While there are important elements of continuity with the gospel in each culture and religion, there are at the same time equally critical elements of discontinuity. The elements of discontinuity necessitate encounters between the worldview of the culture in question and the gospel and a break with certain patterns of behavior (Gilliland 1989a:12, 20-22).

5. The incarnation is the model for contextual communication. The supreme model of contextualization is the incarnation, the Word of God being born into a specific socio-cultural context. As Dean S. Gilliland has expressed it, “When we speak of mission, we are saying that what God did once and for all in Jesus Christ must become Life in every human situation” (1989b:52). Therefore, contextualization is more than an
adaptation of the gospel as it is preached among people in the West; it is more than a mere translation or alteration of the theology of Western churches intended to look indigenous in the new culture. As Taber has stated,

What is needed now is for Africans and Asians to start afresh, beginning with the direct interaction of their cultures with the Scriptures rather than tagging along at the tail end of the long history of western embroidery, and to restate the Christian faith in answer to Asian/African questions, with Asian/African methodologies and terminologies (1978:10).

The same principle also applies to the relationship between old and new churches. Mission is not to be seen as expansion of the church into new cultures, but rather the incarnation of the church in new cultures, where the church is born anew into a new context. Jesus, the incarnate Word of God, addressed the felt needs of the people in Palestine and communicated the good news of the Kingdom of God within their frame of reference. Similarly, the church must participate in God’s already ongoing mission in each culture and society in the world by relating the gospel to the felt needs of each people by communicating the gospel within the frame of reference of each.

6. Dynamic equivalence is the goal of contextual communication. One way to be faithful to the text and relevant to the context is to follow the dynamic equivalence model, developed by Kraft on the basis of translation theories. These translation theories maintain that,

the aim of translation is to bring about an equivalence between the response of the contemporary hearers/readers of the translation and that of the original hearers/readers of the communication recorded in the document being translated. This model sees the translated Word acting as a communicational stimulus toward the recreation of an impact on today’s receptors that is (roughly) equivalent to that recorded in the Word (1979a:402).

Just as a text is translated from one language to another, the Christian faith in word and life has to be transculturated from one culture (the culture of the participants in the biblical case) to another culture (the contemporary culture of those among whom the
The purpose of this transculturation is to “represent the meanings of the historical events (i.e., the dynamic interactions between God and man described in the biblical casebook), as if they were clothed in contemporary events” (Kraft 1979a:280). Through such a “re-creation of equivalent events in today’s cultural contexts” (Kraft 1979a:281) the same responses of commitment to God as those of the biblical persons can be elicited from contemporary people in their specific context. This model of dynamic equivalence may be applied not only to communication of the gospel but also to theologizing, to the development of church structures, worship forms, and all other aspects of the Christian life and ministry (Kraft 1979a:261-344).

7. The contextuality of communication is to be judged by cultural insiders. Since contextualization focuses on relevance to the context, Christian insiders in the culture must be the chief agents of contextualization. Only the local Christian congregation is fully qualified, guided by the Holy Spirit and the biblical casebook, to discern what the gospel says to them in their context and how they should respond in meaningful ways. Just as the local church acts as a hermeneutical community checking individual distorted interpretations of the gospel, the world-wide church and the church in all ages function as a hermeneutical community helping each individual church to avoid

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5 In his definition of contextualized theology, Gilliland emphasizes that it is “the dynamic reflection carried out by the particular church upon its own life in the light of the Word of God and historic Christian truth. . . . As members of the body of Christ interpret the Word, using their own thoughts and employing their own cultural gifts, they are better able to understand the gospel as incarnation” (1989a:12-13).

6 The role of the missionary (as a cultural outsider) is secondary and supportive, but is, as Mike Brislen points out, still important. “Final decisions must come from the group of believers. Initially, however, the missionary must be able to present a culturally relevant model. This model will be subject to modifications, even major modification or rejection, by the believing community. We must question the assumption that the missionary can or should avoid presenting a model. If a model is not formally presented, then the missionary’s own practice will be the ‘presented model’” (1996:366 note 7).
falling prey to an uncritical contextualization due to cultural biases (Hiebert 1994:91). The dialogue between churches in different cultures (and in different ages) may also help each church to practice contextualization in such a way that the fellowship between churches as much as possible is maintained.

God’s mission in Jesus Christ is the supreme example of a contextual communication. The ministry of Jesus Christ and the early church was characterized by the contextual principles outlined above. When looking at mission history, Paul G. Hiebert describes the period in Protestant mission from 1800 to 1950 as the “era of noncontextualization.” In researching the history of Fulbe mission, including the mission principles and approaches of selected Fulbe mission projects in Northern Nigeria, I will examine the extent to which missionaries among Fulbe have escaped the “era of noncontextualization” (1987:104-106).

**Contextual Conversion**

The goal of communicating the gospel is conversion. Contextual communication aims at bringing about a conversion in which the convert relates his/her new faith in Jesus Christ to his own context and remains within this context. I will, therefore, first identify

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7 Bevans identifies two *loki theologici* for classical theology, scripture and tradition, and adds another two for contextual theology, culture and social change (which other contextual theologians prefer to join as one source under the heading of culture) (1994:1-2, 113). In my understanding of contextualization, there are only two primary sources, the text and the context, but tradition as part of the experience of the church through the ages and throughout all contexts plays a role as a resource, (or a secondary source) helping the local church to avoid an uncritical contextualization.

8 An example of this would be the decisions made at the Jerusalem council (Ac. 15), where the representatives from the churches of a Hellenistic context agreed, among other things, to avoid eating blood and meat from strangled animals. They accepted this, not because this was their own understanding of the gospel, but in order to maintain fellowship with Jewish Christians. David W. Shenk expresses the same concern about fellowship when he warns that “A commitment to contextualization may sever the emerging believing community from the symbols of relationship with the universal church. This relationship is vitally important to a minority community struggling for identity and security.” He, therefore, advises both the traditional churches and the emerging churches in Muslim contexts to work on developing this fellowship (1989:6).
the basic constants of a Christian conversion and then point out the specific characteristics of a contextual conversion.

The Constants of Conversion

The basic meaning of the key words for conversion in both the Old Testament (Hebrew: *shuv*) and the New Testament (Greek: *epistrepho*) is turning or returning. Conversion is a “turning, in the sense of changing or reversing the direction, in which one is headed so that it is toward rather than away from God, and this turning is accompanied with the need for repentance (Greek: *metanoia*”) (Kraft 1979a:333). This reorientation comes in response to a call or invitation from God, and involves a turning away from something or someone that is renounced, and a turning to something or someone that is embraced. The Bible gives many cases of conversion, but it never presents a prescribed form of conversion. Still, however, it is possible to point to some theological constants or principles in the conversion process.

1. Conversion is a personal reorientation towards God at the initiative of God. The basis for the call to conversion in the New Testament is Jesus Christ’s announcement that the Kingdom of God is at hand (Mk. 1:15). At God’s initiative, a series of dynamic interactions take place between God and human beings in which the individual or the group, by responding to stimuli (from or at least used by God), make decisions leading to a commitment to God in Jesus Christ. Through this new faith commitment, the convert by the grace of God receives forgiveness of sins and enters into the Kingdom of God (Eph. 2:10) (Löffler 1978:38).

2. Conversion involves an interaction with and an incorporation into the church. According to the New Testament, the church, being the body of Christ, is God’s preferred way of communicating the gospel to individuals or groups. Furthermore, a commitment to Christ involves a commitment to the body of Christ, the church. The interactions with
the local church leads one through baptism to incorporation into the church. Cyprian’s statement *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the church there is no salvation) is true in the sense that the goal of conversion is the incorporation into the body of Christ because “Apart from the body no members can maintain their walk with God, their identity, or their purpose” (Van Engen 1993:50). The key role of the church in conversion may also be expressed by stating that the gospel is a relationship (with God in Jesus Christ and with other believers) mediated by relationships (with representatives of the church).

3. Conversion involves a personal decision in response to God’s call. The initiative for the conversion of individuals and groups of people is from God, who primarily uses the church to communicate the gospel, but conversion also involves the personal decision of people to turn away from whatever they have been trusting in (repentance) and to turn to God in Jesus Christ (belief). Based on an analysis of a number of conversion passages in the New Testament in which the verb forms denoting the process of conversion are always in the active voice, David J. Hesselgrave concludes that “It is the believer who turns. . . . Conversion is an act which is commanded” (1995:235).

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9 Peter L. Berger claims that the *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the church there is no salvation) principle has general validity for all religions, provided that *salus* is understood as plausibility. All religious traditions require religious communities as plausibility structures in order to survive, such as the Christian *koinonia*, the Islamic *umma*, and the Buddhist *sangha*. When the individual *homo religious* is no longer part of a religious community which functions as an effective plausibility structure for him/her, the plausibility of his/her faith and subjective religious reality will be undermined (1974:55). Sociologists of religion have demonstrated the necessity of incorporation into a religious community for a successful conversion. Conversion may be seen as the development of a new conception of self related to worldview construction. A radical transformation of the subjective reality of the individual, called alternation, of which religious conversion is a typical example is only made possible by the presence of a plausibility structure. In Christianity this plausibility structure, which is the social base functioning as the laboratory of transformation, is the church (Berger and Luckmann 1966:142-146). With reference to Saul of Tarsus, Berger and Thomas Luckmann note that the most difficult phase of conversion is the incorporation phase. “Saul may have become Paul in the aloneness of religious ecstasy, but he could remain Paul only in the context of the Christian community that recognized him as such and confirmed the ‘new being’ in which he located this identity” (1966:145). The religious community is the indispensable plausibility structure, which helps the convert to continue taking his/her conversion experience seriously and to retain a sense of the plausibility of the new faith.
4. Conversion is a process with baptism as its climax. A person becomes a Christian by faith and baptism (Mk. 16:15). Whereas faith in Jesus Christ according to biblical examples is borne out of a process of interactions between God and the convert, baptism is the unique event that marks the entrance into the church. The sacrament of baptism, which is administered by the church, expresses that the convert is united with Christ and has become a member of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). Baptism signifies the radical nature of conversion. It is a new birth, in which the convert dies away from an old life and is resurrected to a new life in allegiance to Christ. In this new life the convert is set free by the truth of Christ to live by the power of Christ (Rom. 6-8).

5. Conversion concerns all aspects of the convert’s life and leads to worldview and behavioral changes. The new faith allegiance to God is accompanied by a break with the past, which is so radical that it is called a death and so costly that family and possessions may be at stake (Lk. 14:25ff). Conversion and sanctification cannot be separated since conversion involves, here and now, a new way of thinking and behaving (Löffler 1978:39; Newbigin 1969:149; Gilliland 1998a:98-117).

The “constants of conversion,” listed above, are, according to the Bible, the requirements of a Christian conversion. They may therefore be used as indicators of conversion in the research of the movement to Christ among the pastoral Fulbe.

**The Characteristics of a Contextual Conversion**

According to the New Testament, conversion to Jesus Christ and incorporation into the body of Christ is the God-given purpose of the communication of the gospel. The biblical record of the interactions of God with human beings in a variety of contexts shows that God’s communication with human beings has been highly contextual and that the result has been conversions of a contextual nature. Here some of the indicators of contextual conversions will be discussed.
1. A contextual conversion takes place within the culture. Before the Jerusalem Council (Ac. 15), the early church commonly required the Gentiles to “convert” to the Jewish culture/religion as a prerequisite for their conversion to Christ. A contextual conversion, such as that which the council agreed upon at the recommendations of Paul and Peter, involves the convert’s being allowed and encouraged to express his/her new faith through his/her own culture. William Barclay points out that the message of reconciliation is to be preached “within, across, and above cultural boundaries” leading all people to conversion to God.

The meeting point is that of reconciliation, the point when the person—regardless of his religious or cultural status—becomes a new person in Christ. This does not mean that he becomes neos, or new in point of time, but kairos, or new in point of quality. Thus when a person is converted to God, it does not mean that Christ Jesus makes all Jews into Gentiles or all Gentiles into Jews; He produces a new kind of person out of both, although they remain Gentiles and Jews (Barclay 1959:136 as quoted in Kasdorf 1980:87).

The alternative to a contextual conversion is extractionism, which involves a double conversion—to Christ and to the culture of the missionary. As a result of the conversion to the culture of the missionary, the convert may be alienated from his/her own cultural environment.\(^{10}\)

2. A contextual conversion keeps the convert within his/her sociological group. In a contextual conversion, even the conversion of an individual, the church must always have the larger sociological group to which the convert belongs in mind. As Lesslie Newbigin points out, “Conversion will always be wrongly understood unless it is

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\(^{10}\) Don M. McCurry suggests that this extractionist approach has been “the single most important reason for a greater lack of results in work among Muslims” (1979:14). He sees the cause of this unhealthy and unsuccessful approach to be, on the Christian side, a judgmental attitude that sees Islamic cultures as totally evil, and, on the Muslim side, the continued application of (parts of the) law of apostasy (1979:16). John D. C. Anderson, agreeing with McCurry, calls this approach to Islam “cultic” rather than Christian, because it conceives Islam as a “stronghold of Satan” and thus forgets Islam’s roots in Christianity and Judaism and fails to appreciate God’s sovereign working also in the history of Islam. The “cultic” approach “is therefore anxious that its converts should repudiate everything in Islam and ‘come out of it, making a clear, bold, uncompromising stand for the truth, for God is not there!’” (1976:290-291).
remembered that the Church is the *pars pro toto* (a part for the whole). God converts a man not only that he may be saved, but also that he may be the sign, earnest and instrument of God’s total plan of salvation” (1969:113). Therefore, instead of separating the individual from his/her sociological group, the individual should become a point of entrance for carrying the gospel into the group.\(^1\)

Donald McGavran explicates the principle of conversion within a context and within the sociological group of the convert by pointing out that converts should,

remain thoroughly one with their own people in most matters. They should continue to eat what their people eat. They should not say, my people are vegetarians, but now that I have become a Christian I’m going to eat meat. After they become Christians they should be more rigidly vegetarian than they were before. In the matter of clothing, they should continue to look precisely like their kinsfolk. In the matter of marriage, most peoples are endogamous, they insist that “our people marry only our people” (1992:D-103).

As Jesus promised (Mk. 8:34-37), conversion may involve exclusion and persecution from the convert’s family and community. Even so, the convert should be encouraged and helped to remain with his/her own people so that he/she on all occasions can say,

\(^{11}\) One way of acknowledging the sociological group is to aim for group conversions and people movements. Around the turn of the century, Gustav Warneck advocated group conversion as the goal of mission. The apostles baptized whole families and established house churches. “In essence the Christianization of entire peoples is the same as the Christianization of families” (Warneck quoted in Kasdorf 1980:117). The concept of conversions as part of people movements has become one of the cornerstones in the church growth school, heralded by McGavran (1955). Kraft, pointing out that in many Muslim societies the term Christian is synonymous with traitor, outlines the ideal solution to the question of how to avoid extracting individuals completely from their social group. “If Muslims from group-oriented societies continue to come one by one, the present extractism, separateness and foreignness of the Christian group will continue, and the terminological problems will continue to have to be dealt with by outsiders: outsiders like us from the western world, or outsiders, who are called national Christians. But if groups come ‘en masse’ without social dislocation, with their heads held high because their family and kinship solidarity remains intact, then both the cultural and the linguistic transformation is carried out in such a way that the large numbers of full-fledged citizens are involved in arriving at new cultural agreements, new meanings that can effectively hold their own against the previous meanings. The transformation of culture cannot be done by single individuals; it has to be done by groups who have come to new agreements as to the meanings of terms and concepts” (1974a:75). While we aim, pray, and work for people movements, we may still have to consider creatively intermediate solutions which point towards the development of indigenous Christian groups achieved through converts coming one by one.
I am a better son [daughter] than I was before; I am a better father [mother] than I was before; I am a better husband [wife] than I was before; and I love you more than I used to do. You can hate me, but I will not hate you. You can exclude me, but I will include you. You can force me out of our ancestral house; but I will live on its veranda. Or I will get a house just across the street. I am still one of you, I am more one of you than I ever was before (1992:D103).

3. A contextual conversion involves an encounter between the convert’s old religion and worldview and his/her new faith in Jesus Christ. Kraft has pointed to three critical encounters between the old and the new worldview.

- An allegiance or commitment encounter, leading to a new relationship with God, where allegiance to God takes precedence over all other loyalties.
- A truth encounter, leading to a right understanding about God and the relationship between God and humanity and between humans, in accordance with the biblical teaching.
- A power encounter, where the trust in God replaces the reliance on and/or the fear of other powers, leading to spiritual freedom (Kraft 1991b, 1999).

These encounters lead to radical changes on the deep worldview level, are reflected in the behavior of the convert. Some aspects of the convert’s life will therefore be changed (discontinuity), whereas others are incorporated into the new life (continuity).

Conversion within the culture and within the sociological group of the convert and the encounter with the old religion of the convert are the three most significant aspects of a contextual conversion. The remaining four characteristics listed below support these three aspects.

4. In a contextual conversion, the gospel is communicated to the convert according to the indigenous communication patterns within the convert’s frame of reference. In “God’s inspired casebook” we see how God communicated with people using communication patterns and methods with which the people were already familiar. God still communicates with people in this way. Missionaries working for a
contextualized conversion should seek to recognize God’s contextual communication with the people, endeavor to use their frame of reference, and work toward discovering the communication channels appropriate to the people’s context.

5. A contextual conversion means that the actual felt needs of the receptors are met by the gospel. Although all people irrespective of their culture suffer from the effects of the same fall, the effects take on different forms, creating different needs in each culture and individual; still all of these needs may be met by the gospel.

6. A contextual conversion takes place with reference to points of contact already present in the culture of the convert. God has already provided points of contact for the gospel within every culture, and he uses these points of contact when leading people to conversion. The contextual communicator will recognize this and look for redemptive analogies and other points of contact between the religion and culture and the gospel (cf. Richardson 1974, 1981).

7. A contextual conversion takes place in accordance with decision making patterns in the culture of the convert. Conversion to Christ involves a decision (or a series of decisions), but decision making patterns vary from culture to culture. Kraft therefore advises that Christian conversion should be in accord with the decision making patterns of the convert’s culture. The advocates of the gospel need to become familiar with those patterns and work within these patterns rather than imposing on the converts the patterns of their own culture as if their own culture’s patterns alone were Christian (1979a:344). When analyzing the spiritual journey of the Fulbe converts, these seven characteristics of contextual conversion will help us identify aspects of contextual conversion.
A Decision Process Model

A variety of models, based on decision process thinking, have been developed by James F. Engel (1977), Søgaard (1975, 1993), Everett M. Rogers (1983), and many others. For the purposes of this study, I have chosen an adaptation of the conversion model developed by Allan R. Tippett using Van Gennep’s theory of rites of passage and his own study of conversion in the Pacific Islands (1974). This is a simplified model that is useful in analyzing the spiritual journey of pastoral Fulbe.

This model (Figure 3) underscores that the communication of the gospel is not a single event, but a series of communicational events that form process or a spiritual journey. The conversion process is here depicted as consisting of three phases: the awareness phase, the conversion phase, and the incorporation phase. These three phases might also be considered as three dimensions of the conversion process: the dimension of awareness, the dimension of conversion, and the dimension of incorporation.12

Whereas Tippett in his original model has a fourth phase, the maturation phase, I follow Seppo Syrjänen, who in his research of the conversion of Muslims in Pakistan

\[12\] Tippett refers to the second phase as the decision phase in the conversion process, but I have chosen to refer to it as the conversion phase in order to underscore that the person encountering the gospel makes significant decisions in response to the gospel throughout all three phases. All three phases taken together form the conversion process, but the second phase is the phase where the person encountering the gospel changes his/her identity in relation to Jesus Christ, and may be called a convert. Therefore I have termed this phase the conversion phase.
combines this phase with the phase of incorporation (1987:63-66). The phase of incorporation in this study therefore has no definite end, rather it continues throughout the life of the converts; similarly, the awareness phase has no definite beginning.\(^{13}\)

The movement from the awareness phase to the conversion phase is not marked by any observable events; and often the two phases overlap. The awareness of the gospel, that is the understanding of Christianity as an alternative to one’s present way of life, may come to individuals or groups by way of discovery, through a natural development, through pressure from without, through the internal pressure of a crisis situation, or through direct advocacy. When the receptor has not only been exposed to the gospel message, but has also understood it so well that he/she is ready to respond to it meaningfully, either positively or negatively, he/she has entered the conversion phase.

In the conversion phase, the receptor begins to consider the gospel and its implications for him/her and finally makes a conscious decision to become a follower of Jesus Christ and a member of the church. In my research, I have considered the initiation rite of baptism, which confirms the convert’s change of religious faith and his/her transfer to the religious community of the church, to be the point of transition between the conversion phase and the incorporation phase.\(^{14}\)

\(^{13}\) In Tippett’s original model, the four phases are clearly separated by observable events. The point of realization separates the awareness phase and the conversion phase, the point of decision (or encounter) separates the conversion phase and the incorporation phases, and finally the point of consummation (or confirmation) separates the incorporation phase and the maturation phase. Implicit in his model, however, is an understanding of conversion, which is based on a bounded set theory. Tippett’s model, however, does not do full justice to the theological understanding of conversion as a very dynamic process as outlined above, according to which the crucial issue is the direction of the movement. Here the centered sets model may better help us understand and describe conversion. Whereas the bounded sets model emphasizes the relationship of the individual or group to certain boundaries, the centered sets model focuses on the relationship of the individual to the center, which is God/Jesus Christ. Here the critical issue is whether a person is moving toward God by responding to God’s stimuli. Conversion, then, is manifested in the act of changing directions, that is, in the act of beginning to respond to God’s revelational stimuli (Hiebert 1978:26-29; Gilliland 1998:109-114).

\(^{14}\) These three phases correspond to the communication mandates in the Great Commission “(1) \textit{to proclaim} the message; (2) \textit{to persuade} the unbeliever; and (3) \textit{to cultivate} the believer” (Engel and Norton 1975:44), or in the terminology of Søgaard (1975:28ff) to sow, to reap, and to refine.
When communicating the gospel, it is important to know where the receptor is in his/her spiritual journey. The receptor’s understanding of the gospel, his/her relationship to God, to the church, and to his/her original religion and religious community, along with his/her needs and problems differ from the awareness phase through the conversion phase to the incorporation phase. Therefore, the content and form of the message and the media used to communicate the message must be adapted to the spiritual position of the receptor.

**Contextual Congregations**

The goal of the communication is not only conversion, but also the incorporation of the converts into local congregations or the establishment of new congregations. Therefore, we will first consider the distinguishing features of a local congregation that indicate that it is a valid expression of the church of Jesus Christ. The goal of the contextual communication of the gospel is the development of contextual congregations. Therefore, I will endeavor to discover the direction in which congregations should develop in order to become contextual congregations. These ecclesiological and contextual definitions and characterizations are worked out to be used for the evaluation of existing local congregations and of alternative models of congregations for pastoral Fulbe.

**The Signs of the True Church**

Ever since the beginning of the church almost 2000 years ago, the nature of the church, its essence, attributes, marks, criteria, symbols, signs, and distinguishing features, have been debated (Van Engen 1981:81-82). Inherent in most definitions of the church is the tension between the church as seen from above (by God only) and the church as seen from below (by human beings). One example of this is the “form-essence” dichotomy,
where the problem is “that what we believe to be the ‘essence’ of the church, we do not see in its ‘forms’” (Van Engen 1981:49).\(^{15}\)

One way of dealing with this dichotomy has been to state that the church is at the same time visible and hidden. According to a Lutheran understanding of the church, the visible elements are the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments, whereas the faith remains invisible.\(^{16}\) Another complementary way of dealing with the same dichotomy has been suggested by Charles E. Van Engen. Looking at the church’s nature from the standpoint of a “becoming-essence,” he sees the church as an emerging observable reality, which is in the process of becoming in reality what it is in faith (1981:62; 1993:41).\(^{17}\)

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\(^{15}\) The “phenomenon-creed” dichotomy is very similar. The church is to be believed (according to the creed), but the visible phenomenon called the church which is perceived does not manifest the same characteristics as those proclaimed in the creed. A third dichotomy is between the church as communio sanctorum (communion of the saints) and the church as a human institution (Van Engen 1981:50-55).

\(^{16}\) The Danish Lutheran theologian Regin Prenter points to the reformation understanding of the church as the gathering of believers in which the word is preached purely and the sacraments are administered. What constitutes the church is only the word, the sacraments, and faith. This means that the church at the same time is visible and hidden. The church is visible in the preaching of the word and in the administration of the sacraments, for which an office has been appointed. These are the visible distinctive marks of the church. But when we move from the word to faith, we move from God’s visible marks to humanity’s hidden faith. Only the fruits of faith, good deeds commanded by God, are visible, but the faith itself is not visible, because it is a faith in God’s invisible grace, communicated through the visible signs of the word and the sacraments (1979:568-573). The Catholic theologian Hans Küng follows the same line of argument when he states that “There are not two churches, one visible and one invisible. . . . The one Church, in its essential nature and in its external forms alike, is always at once visible and invisible. The Church which we believe is one Church: visible and invisible, or perhaps rather hidden at once. This is the Church which believes and is believed” (1968:38).

\(^{17}\) “This viewpoint involves a process whereby the Church is and becomes. It is a fully formed community, a living sacrament, and a sign before God, its members, and those outside its walls. But simultaneously it is in the process of becoming through carefully contextualized goal-setting, planning, and evaluation. The gap will be bridged between the Church’s human, often-sinful, visible, and organizational side and its divine, holy, invisible, and organic side. In this view the essential Church is never the same during any two days, because it is constantly becoming, developing, and ‘emerging.’ Yet in another sense the Church is already by nature what it is becoming and simply must continually change, improve, reform and emerge. . . . The Church thus emerges naturally, but with supernatural characteristics; it is a sociological entity with a spiritual nature” (Van Engen 1993:41).
What then constitutes the church? Since the church is at the same time visible and hidden, and since the church is always in the process of becoming what it already is, we must look for “open concepts,” windows, signs or pointers to the reality of the church that may not be definitively described or defined. However, in order to be able to use the concept of the church in the analyses of this study, it is necessary as far as possible to identify some concrete, visible and tangible characteristics (Van Engen 1981:406-407).

In one of the key passages where Jesus talks about the future church, he concludes by stating that “where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Mt. 18:15-20),18 or in the stronger words of the King James Version, “where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” What qualifies a gathering of people to be the church is the presence of Jesus Christ in their midst.

The church was born on the day of Pentecost. The significance of Pentecost is that Christ came to be present among his disciples through his Holy Spirit. After that, whenever the disciples gathered in the name of Jesus Christ, Christ was present in their midst through his Spirit, continuing the work he had once done among them in the flesh, now, through his body the church. The church therefore happens when and where Christ, according to the Bible, has promised his presence to his disciples (Watson 1982:336; Moltmann 1993:121-123). Following this understanding, the true church may therefore be identified by the signs listed below.

1. A gathering of people in the name of Jesus. According to Matthew 18:20, Jesus has promised to be present when and where two or three people gather in his name. So one basic requirement of a church is that at least two or three people come together in the name of Jesus Christ. This fellowship around Jesus, based on his authority, is a continuation of the fellowship of the disciples with Jesus during his earthly ministry. The

18 All Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version, unless otherwise indicated.
church is not a sacred place or a sacred institution, and it is not constituted by the office of a bishop or a pastor. It is essentially a people, a fellowship (*koinonia*) around Christ (1 Jn. 1:3), constituted and made sacred by the presence of Christ in its midst. Just as the gospel has been described as a relationship mediated by relationships, the church, in its basic form, can be described as relationships (Getz 1988:94-106; Gilliland 1998a:184-185).  

2. The preaching of the word of Jesus. The presence of Jesus is primarily communicated through his word to those gathered in his name. Jesus is the Word of God, which through incarnation “became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (Jn. 1:14). The church is where the Word of God is preached, for there Jesus is present with his grace.

Certainly, there are many other components that are beneficial to the church, but the one essential component is the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in the written Word of God, the Scriptures (Watson 1982:335). You might say that all the other necessary signs or marks of the church are contained in this most important one, the Word. The Word, the gospel of Jesus Christ, contains in itself the four classical marks of the church named in the ecumenical creeds; it is one, holy, catholic and apostolic (Van Engen 1981:87-88). With the reformers it may be concluded that the church essentially has only one sacrament, the gospel of Jesus, which is also communicated to us through baptism and holy communion.

3. The sacraments of baptism and holy communion. Jesus Christ is present through his Spirit at the baptism in his name. As promised by John the Baptist it is Jesus who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and thereby incorporates the baptized person into his

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19 Seen from the point of view of sociology of religion, the church as *koinonia* or a religious community functions as the plausibility structure for the converts (and for all other members of the church), which makes it possible for them to maintain their new identity as Christians (Berger 1974:54-60).
body, the church (1 Cor. 12:13; Tit. 3:5). Baptism, therefore, becomes a very special characteristic of the church, uniquely associated with the church. It is by faith and the baptism--administered by the church--that man is saved (Mk. 15:16), and this baptism is the entrance into the church.

The very words of Jesus at the institution of the Holy Communion (in Lk. 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26) indicate his presence in the church through bread and wine, shared among the believers gathered for the Lord’s Supper. As baptism is the sacrament of entrance into the body of Christ, Holy Communion is the sacrament of continued fellowship with Jesus Christ and with the other members of the body of Christ. As a sacrament of fellowship, Holy Communion points to the next characteristic of the true church, that of unity. Just as all of the church members partake of the same bread, they all belong to the same body of Jesus Christ.

4. The unity of love among the members of the church. Unity, which is a characteristic of the true church, is not necessarily organizational unity nor is it characterized by agreement in the local church on all issues; rather unity is communal, characterized by members genuinely loving one another. “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that your are my disciples, if you love another” (Jn. 13:34-35). The presence of Jesus in the church may be seen by the members of the church and those outside the church by the love that Christians have for one another.

It is in the mutual love of the disciples that there is parousia, the Lord’s coming--after Jesus’ first coming, and before his second.20 And it is in the unity of love that the disciples and all those who follow after them can discover the presence of Jesus, though

20 Charles K. Barrett sees the parousia in the time between the resurrection of Christ and his return to have been promised in John 14:23. “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching (which Barrett understands as the new commandment to love one another). My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (Van Engen 1993:90).
they do not see him; for when they are gathered in loving koinonia, he will be there. And where the head of the church is present in the midst of his disciples, there the church exists (Van Engen 1993:91).

The unity of love is also seen in non-partisan, non-sectarian attitudes towards other Christians in the same local church or in other churches. The unity of Christians shows the presence of Christ in their midst, so that people in the world outside the church may understand and believe that Jesus has been sent out of God’s love and that God also loves them (Jn. 17:20-23).²¹

5. Prayers in the name of Jesus. The church was born in the atmosphere of prayer, the Holy Spirit being poured out on the followers of Jesus gathered in the upper room for prayer (Ac. 2). Throughout the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles, a close connection exists between prayer and the Spirit’s powerful presence in the church (e.g., Ac. 4:31). Jesus Christ spoke to the church (and individuals) in their prayers and in response to their prayers (Thomson 1970:1021-1022). The prayers of the church are a continuation of the Lord’s prayer, with which Jesus invited his disciples to join him in praying to God his heavenly Father, calling him “our Father” (Mt. 6:5-15).

6. Continuation of Jesus’ mission in the world. This fellowship around Jesus, guided by the word, brought into life and renewed by the sacraments, united in love, and breathing through prayer, is sent into the world by Jesus so that it might spread everywhere “the fragrance of the knowledge of him” (2. Cor. 2:14). To the church sent to participate in the continuation of Jesus’ mission and diaconia in the world, Jesus promises his eternal presence: “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the

²¹ The effect of lack of unity among Christians has been forcefully demonstrated by Karl Barth who stated that we cannot justify, neither spiritually nor biblically “the existence of a plurality of churches genuinely separated, and mutually excluding one another internally and therefore externally. A plurality of churches in this sense means a plurality of lords, a plurality of spirits, a plurality of gods” (Barth 1974:1 as quoted in Van Engen 1993:49).
age” (Mt. 28:20). And in the person of the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned, Jesus promise he will meet his church as they engage in *diaconia* (Mt. 25:31-46).

As such, the church is a missionary people sent into the world to represent the reign of God in Jesus Christ and to invite people to enter the Kingdom of God. The church is called to do this through words of love (*kerygma*), deeds of love (*diaconia*), and a life of love (*koinonia*) (Guder 1998:97-109).

All six of the signs of the true church are demonstrated in the life and ministry of the apostolic church described in Acts 2: the fellowship (v. 42), the word (v. 42), the sacraments (v. 41-42), the unity in love (v. 44), the prayers (v. 42), and the mission (v. 45 and 47). These six characteristics, which point to the presence of Jesus Christ in a gathering of people, will be used in evaluating existing local congregations. And new models for local congregations will be evaluated on the basis of whether they further or hinder the development of these characteristics.

**The Characteristics of a Contextual Local Congregation**

The above listed signs or characteristics belong to the *esse* (being) of the true church. If one or more of these signs is absent, the essence of the church is aberrant and, as a result, the local congregation becomes a handicapped church, a dying church, or something other than a church.

A contextual local congregation is a local congregation that reflects the biblical signs of the true church in such a way that is correctly understood by people in the local context. The characteristics of a contextual local congregation may be said to belong to the *bene-esse* (well-being) of the church in a local context. If one or more of these contextual characteristics is absent, the local congregation may still be a true church, but it may not fit very well into the local context (Van Engen 1981:65).
One way of looking at these six characteristics of the true church is to see them as six essential functions of the church. The forms and structures for carrying out these functions have differed throughout the history of the church. In order to see a contextual local congregation come into being, it is necessary to develop forms and structures that will help a local congregation to be “relevant to the context” (i.e., forms and structures that fit into the cultural setting of the people of that society), and which at the same time are “faithful to the text” (i.e., forms and structures that fulfill the God-given functions of the church).

The contextual congregation may, however, also be viewed from the perspective of the convert. Before conversion, a convert feels more or less at home in his/her community and culture. A criteria of contextualization for evaluating congregations could be to what extent the convert, without forsaking his/her own culture, feels “at home” in the local congregation.22

The “dynamic-equivalence transculturation”-approach to the local congregation, proposed by Kraft, combines the perspectives of analyzing the church in terms of its functions and in terms of the convert’s perception of the church. Whereas a “formal-correspondence church” is usually modeled after a foreign church with all its forms and structures, a “dynamic-equivalence church” “like a contemporary translation, should

22 Hans Kasdorf points to the responsibility of the local congregation to help converts feel at home in the congregation. “There is the socioreligious responsibility of acceptance. Even before the convert is baptized, the church must demonstrate her full acceptance of the convert into friendship and fellowship. This becomes particularly crucial in cultures with strong kinship bonds and social cohesiveness. Although social dislocation should be minimized at all costs, the young convert must find ‘a place to feel at home’ in the circle of believers where people love each other and care for one another” (1980:183-184). Kraft referring to the book A Place to Feel at Home by Welbourne and Ogot (1966) sounds the same note when he discusses the development of independent churches in Africa. “These groups have split off from churches that demand they become foreigners in their own home territory, churches started by the likes of me. They have become independent, not to reject Christianity, but to preserve it. This is the only way that they could see to preserve Christianity and to indigenize it. And have been so captured by the message of Christ that they are demanding the right to express their faith in non-foreign ways. They are demanding a place to feel at home, both within Christianity and within their own cultures. I would like the sound of this phrase to work its way to your minds—a place to feel at home, so that you don’t feel like a foreigner in your own land” (1974b:139).
impress the uninitiated observer as an original production in the contemporary culture, not as a badly fitted import from somewhere else” (1979a:318). The goal here is not to produce a “formal correspondence” to any church, not even a New Testament church, but a “functional equivalence” with the true church as it is described in the New Testament.

A “dynamic-equivalence church” produces an impact on the people of the society of which it is a part equivalent to that which the scripturally described peoples of God produced upon the original hearers. In that equivalence the church will need leadership, organization, education, worship, buildings, behavioral standards, and means of expressing Christian love and concern to the people of its own culture who have not yet responded to Christ. But a dynamically equivalent church will employ culturally appropriate forms in meeting these needs--familiar, meaningful forms that it will possess, adapt, and fill with Christian meanings (1979a:321).

Contextualization of congregations is an ongoing process, so the following characteristics should therefore be seen as pointers toward the contextualization process. These characteristics of a local congregation, which are to be understood as indicators of a contextual development of a congregation, will be used to identify contextual aspects of local congregations (or the lack of the same) and will be used as the requirements or ideals for alternative models of congregations.

1. A contextual local congregation should aim at helping its members to remain within their own culture and community, so that the congregation is not seen as a foreign element in the context. Instead of extracting its members from their culture and community, the contextual congregation should advocate a contextual conversion.23 A

23 Jarell Waskom Pickett has pointed out that an extractionist approach to church building will make the communication of the gospel ineffective. “The process of extracting individuals from their setting in Hindu or Moslem communities does not build a church. On the contrary it rouses antagonism against Christianity and builds barriers against the spread of the gospel. Moreover, that process has produced many unfortunate, and not a few tragic results in the lives of those most deeply concerned. It has deprived the converts of the values represented by their families and friends and made them dependent for social support to the good life and restraint of evil impulses upon men and women, their colleagues in the Christian faith, with whom they have found it difficult to develop fellowship and a complete sense of community. It has sacrificed much of the convert’s evangelistic potentialities by separating him from his
contextual local congregation should be a fellowship of followers of Jesus who strive to continue to live in fellowship with their non-Christian relatives and neighbors.

In attempting to be relevant in its context, a local congregation should never lose its unique Christian identity, which sets the church apart from any other institution. Being faithful to the biblical principles of the church, it will differ from its surroundings in the whole ethos of the Christian fellowship; however, it will never cease to be relevant for the surrounding community because it expresses its message, fellowship, and service in forms and structures that are familiar to the context and it addresses needs that are felt in the community. The saying by McLuhan (1967) that the medium is the message is very relevant for the church, in whose life the gospel message should be seen. The local congregation, being the God’s primary medium for the communication of the Good News, therefore, should become the Good News of renewal in the community and not be understood as the bad news because it is perceived to lead to the destruction of the local community and culture.

2. A contextual local congregation should endeavor to use the language of the converts and communication methods with which they are familiar in services and other activities. One of the most important parts of the context is the language, because much of a society’s culture is stored in and transmitted in its language. Only when the gospel is communicated in the mother tongue of the members, and only when the members communicate with one another and with God through their own language, can a congregation be said to be contextual.

3. A contextual congregation should attempt to develop and use rituals, symbols, and worship forms which, while communicating the relevant biblical message effectively, address the needs of the members. For literate and non-literate peoples alike, rituals are

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People. It has produced anemic Churches that know no true leadership and are held together chiefly by common dependence on the mission or the missionary” (Pickett quoted in McGavran 1955:10-11).
important for the life of the congregation, “for rituals, like sacred symbols, are languages for speaking of spiritual things” (Hiebert 1994:167). Referring primarily to tribal societies, Hiebert and Eloise Hiebert Meneses conclude that “Churches need to create new rites using symbols familiar to people. . . . Rituals are important to teach new Christians the meaning of their gospel in their new lives and to proclaim the gospel to non-Christians who gather to see what the Christians are doing” (1995:155).

4. A contextual congregation is required to ensure that the education of its members strengthens the members’ faith and their belonging to the local congregation (and the universal church) without alienating them from their original community and its values. A contextual approach to formal and informal education in the local congregation involves the teaching of knowledge and skills that are relevant to the members’ actual Christian life in the congregation and their service and mission in their original community. The content and the form of education, however, may alienate the members from their own people if the teaching is not done primarily within their own context and is not related to the values of their culture.

5. A contextual local congregation should seek to employ indigenous organizational structures and leadership forms so far as they do not contradict biblical principles. Only when the patterns and styles used to govern the life of the fellowship are in harmony with those of the local culture may we speak of a contextualized organization and leadership of the local congregation (Smalley 1992:152-154).

6. The theology and the ethics of the contextual local church should be developed by the members of the local congregations as the congregations reflect on their life in their context in light of the Scriptures. Instead of taking a theology of a dominant Christian group developed in another context, contextual congregations will begin to develop their own understanding of the Christian faith and its implications for them (Bosch 1992:427).
In this section, the elements that make up the essence of the church have been identified. These elements, which reflect the basic functions of any local congregation, may be given different structures and forms in different contexts. Therefore, the direction in which local congregations should develop in order to become contextual congregations has also been considered. The conclusion drawn from examining the signs of the true church and the characteristics of a contextual congregation will be used in analyzing the communication of the gospel to pastoral Fulbe of selected mission projects in Northern Nigeria.

**Applying the Theoretical Concepts to the Research Process**

In this chapter, I first presented the theory upon which the communication research was based. Then I stated my theological convictions concerning the key issues in the communication of the gospel, namely conversion to Christ and the church of Christ into which converts are incorporated. Following this, the expected outcome of a contextual communication of the gospel, namely contextual conversions and contextual congregations, was outlined. In this last section of the chapter, I will briefly explain my approach to the study of the contextual communication of the gospel to pastoral Fulbe in Northern Nigeria.

The first task is to develop the research methodology for obtaining the data needed for analyzing the communication process. I used the library and archival research methods and the field research methods, which will be presented in Chapter 3.

The first element of the communication process to be studied is the receptors--the pastoral Fulbe who will be discussed together with an analysis of relevant aspects of their context. In Chapter 4 and 5, the history and the social and religious context of the pastoral Fulbe in Northern Nigeria will be analyzed.
Then the selected mission projects, who are the communicators of the gospel to *Fulbe*, will be presented. After an overview of the history of *Fulbe* mission in Northern Nigeria, the history of the selected mission projects will be analyzed (Chapter 6).

The encoding of the gospel in messages and the selection of media for their transmission will be examined through an analysis of the mission principles, approaches, and methods of the selected mission projects. The results of this survey will be presented in Chapter 7.

The next task is to analyze the understanding of the messages by the pastoral *Fulbe* and their response to these messages. I will first attempt to discover how the pastoral *Fulbe* evaluate the influence of various factors on their spiritual journey. Among these factors are the media employed by the mission projects and contextual factors. Then I will evaluate the effect of the communicational interaction of the *Fulbe* with the gospel and the church in terms of their cognitive, affective and behavioral responses.

Since the goal of contextual communication is contextual conversions and contextual congregations, a contextual perspective must be used in analyzing the effect of the communication of the gospel. Through a study of life stories of *Fulbe* converts, I will try to identify contextual conversion issues in their spiritual journeys (Chapter 9). After an analysis of the functioning of the traditional congregations in the pastoral *Fulbe* context, I will develop alternative contextual models of congregations in order to identify the congregational model that is most feasible for the pastoral *Fulbe* (Chapter 10).

The final task is to utilize the findings from all parts of the research to develop guidelines for the selection of feasible mission approaches for *Fulbe* mission projects in the future. The conclusion of the study, therefore, is an attempt to identify the critical issues for developing strategies of effective contextual communication of the gospel to pastoral *Fulbe* in Northern Nigeria.
CHAPTER 3
THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

My research falls into two groups, library and archival research and field research. In the library and archival research, I have mainly used traditional methods of studying historical documents and secondary literary sources. In the field research, I have used sociological methods of inquiry.

Library and Archival Research

The analysis of the social and religious context of the pastoral *Fulbe* in Northern Nigeria is based on a study of the relevant historical, sociological, anthropological, and religious literature. The *Fulbe* people seem to be favored subject among researchers. In 1977, a bibliography of the *Fulbe* world listing 2068 books and articles was published, and since then much more has been written about the *Fulbe* (Seydou 1977).

This study is based on the most important books and articles about *Fulbe* in Northern Nigeria,\(^1\) which have been obtained primarily through libraries in Denmark and the USA. Much invaluable material, both published and unpublished, was found in the excellent library of the Joint Christian Ministry in West Africa (JCMWA) in Jos.

In the first half of the 1950s, three anthropologists undertook the pioneer research of *Fulbe* societies and published what became three classical works on pastoral *Fulbe*. C. __________

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\(^1\) Also books and articles dealing with the social and religious life of the pastoral *Fulbe* in neighboring countries have been utilized when the descriptions and analyses have been considered to be of relevance for this study of *Fulbe* in Northern Nigeria.
Edward Hopen studied the semi-nomadic Fulbe in Gwandu emirate in North Western Nigeria. As the title of his book indicates, *The Pastoral Fulbe Family in Gwandu* (1958), he focused his research on family relationships and only studied religion as it affected these.

Derrick J. Stenning, who like Hopen is British, researched the Wodaabe pastoral Fulbe in Borno emirate in North Eastern Nigeria. The main focus in his classic *Savannah Nomads* (1959) is the cultural and political changes of this pastoral community from the time of the jihad of Dan Fodio, when the pastoral Fulbe began to be drawn into the orbit of Islam, to his own time. Stenning’s perspective, therefore, was much broader than Hopen’s, as Stenning analyzed the changes in all the institutions of the society including religion. His greatest contribution to the study of the religion of pastoral Fulbe, however, is found in his very insightful article “Cattle Values and Islamic Values in a Pastoral Population” (1966).

The third classic was produced by the French anthropologist Marguerite Dupire, and was simply called *Peuls Nomades* (1962). She studied the nomadic Wodaabe Fulbe in Niger not very far from the Nigerian border—a group more nomadic but less Islamized than their cousins in Nigeria. She described the pastoral technique, the economy, and the family and clan structure, and also included analyses of religious rituals.

The main source for the study of the pre-Islamic religion of the pastoral *Fulbe* is the books by Amadou Hampâté Bâ, a learned *Pullo* from an aristocratic family in Mali. He was a devout Muslim with a great appreciation for the rich religious and cultural traditions of the *Fulbe* and other ethnic groups in Africa, and he had a strong commitment to religious dialogue between Muslims, Christians, and animists. Over the years, he systematically collected and published *Fulbe* initiation myths from the Senegal-Mali area. These myths, such as *Kumen* (1966) and *Kaydara* (1978), do not contain Islamic elements, but are clearly ancient pre-Islamic myths.

For my analysis of the pre-Islamic religion, I am indebted to the missionary scholar R. Nelson, whose study of these pre-Islamic myths was first presented in an MA thesis in 1978 and then published as a book called *Good News for the Fulbe* in 1997. Whereas Bâ’s material is an excellent source for information on the pre-Islamic religion of the *Fulbe*, I have not used it for studying the present religion of *Fulbe*, because these myths are today only known by a small *Fulbe* elite. R. Nelson’s use of them for his analysis of the worldview of *Fulbe* today may be justified because the core of the *Fulbe* worldview may not have changed much over the centuries. Furthermore, the results of his analyses are in general harmony with other studies such as that by Ruth Veltkamp (1983) and my own analysis, both of which are based on contemporary ethnographic material.

The history of the Islamization of the *Fulbe* is based on standard works on the history and religion of West Africa by authors such as John Spencer Tringham (1962), Mervyn Hiskett (1973, 1984), and Nehemia Levtzion (1979, 1987). John N. Paden (1973) and Jeremy Hinds (n.d.) have given special insight into the role Mahdism among *Fulbe* in Northern Nigeria. It is also from Paden (1973) that the most detailed information about the impact of Sufism has been obtained.
The best source for the study of the religion of pastoral *Fulbe* in Northern Nigeria and the surrounding countries, however, is the unique anthropological material found in the book *Moi, un Mbororo* (1986) by Henri Bocquené. In 1971, nine years after this French Catholic priest came to Northern Cameroon as a missionary, he met Oumarou Ndoudi. Ndoudi, who was then about twenty-five years old, identified himself as a *Mbororo*, that is, a nomadic *Pullo*. He belonged to the *Jafu’en* clan and had spent his life mainly within the area of the former Adamawa lamidate, that is, in North Eastern Nigeria and in North Western Cameroon. As a child he had become sick with leprosy, which made him unable to continue to live as a nomadic cattle herder. He, therefore, spent most of his adult life engaging in other occupations, but he maintained close links with his pastoral relatives.

Ndoudi became Bocquené’s informant concerning *Fulbe* language and culture, and a deep friendship developed over the following years. Despite his years of intimate interaction with the Catholic priest, Ndoudi apparently never considered becoming a Christian, rather remained a Muslim, a proud Muslim and a proud *Mbororo*. The book, which is an ethnographic autobiography of Ndoudi, is the result of seventy-eight hours of narration in *Fulfulde* by Ndoudi over fifteen months. The recordings on fifty-two cassettes were then translated into 1100 pages of French text, from which Bocquené selected what would “encircle the *Mbororo* world” (1988:vii).

How valid is the information presented in this book? Ndoudi, having grown up as a nomadic *Pullo* and being in continual interaction with the nomadic *Fulbe*, must be considered an excellent source of knowledge about the most important aspects of their

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2 I use the translation by Gordeen Gorder into English done for the Fifth Assembly of JCMWA in 1988 in Jos, Nigeria, entitled “I Am a Mbororo. The Autobiography of Ndoudi Oumarou. A Nomadic Fulani from Cameroun.”
religion. Bocquené, having lived in the milieu for more than twenty years and knowing the language and culture of the nomadic Fulbe, was in a good position to understand and evaluate the information given by Ndoudi and also to make a balanced selection of the anthropological material to be included in his book.

Concerning the specific information about Islam, Bocquené states that “from the very long discourse about common Moslem beliefs and practices, I only kept the part where Ndoudi related the impact of Islam on the conscience of the Mbororo” (1988:vii). When the book was published in 1986, it received a very positive critique from anthropologists and other scholars, who accepted the validity of the data and often referred to this book in their own writings.

Of a similar nature to the material in Bocquené’s work (1986) is Angelo B. Maliki’s book Joy and Suffering among the Nomadic Fulani (1984). This book contains the stories told by a forty year old woman and an sixty year old man about their life as nomadic Wodaabe in western Niger. The above material has also been complemented

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3 I have met Ndoudi a number of times in connection with JCMWA assemblies and here seen him interact with Christian Fulbe. When Bocquené’s book was published, many of the Christian Fulbe rejected it, claiming that his information about the Mbororo’en was not correct. One reason for their rejection, however, seemed to be that they did not find it proper that Christian missionaries should be informed about Fulbe culture and religion by a Muslim, who had “refused to become a Christian.” Another reason for their negative attitude toward the book seemed to be that Ndoudi revealed information about their original culture (including their sexual behavior), of which they obviously were ashamed. A third reason for their critique probably was that they saw it as misrepresentative because there are significant variations between the religion and culture of nomadic and semi-nomadic Fulbe, and between different clans of nomadic Fulbe, and even between different lineages of the same clan.

4 “Worried about conserving Ndoudi’s style and the quality of his lively story--translating a man and a culture--I couldn’t imagine going to a resume or an amalgamation. So I had to make a choice in the least subjective way possible. I decided that what would guide me would be my initial objective: the desire to encircle the Mbororo world. To my regret, I had to make certain episodes in the life of our hero to vanish in order to preserve an equilibrium between his life and anecdotes and a representative witness of the culture and of the Mbororo people he was providing us with” (Bocquené 1988:vi-vii).

5 In a press release from the publisher scholars such as Labatut, Christiane Seydou, Jean Malaurie and Lisbet Holtedal recommend the book for its anthropological qualities, and Claude Levi-Strauss called it “Un des chefs d’oeuvre de la littérature ethnographique (One of the chief works of ethnographic literature)” (Karthala 1986).
with material that I have gathered from Christian *Fulbe* in Northern Nigeria during a period of field research in 1998.

The research of the history of mission to *Fulbe* in Northern Nigeria was mainly based on archival research carried out in the archives of the JCMWA in Jos. Among the documents studied were all the invaluable papers read at the assemblies and seminars, the minutes of standing committee meetings and assemblies, and the very informative reports from the secretaries of JCMWA. The most important published material used here was the research on *Fulbe* mission done by two missionaries among *Fulbe*, R. Nelson (1981a) and Paul A. Burkwall (1987, 1988), and by one of the co-workers at Radio Voice of the Gospel (RVOG) in Addis Ababa, Knud Jørgensen (1986).

**The Field Research**

The field research consisted of two structured surveys, seventeen unstructured interviews, and fifteen in-depth interviews that provide for life stories. The aim was to analyze the mission work carried out by five churches, and the spiritual journey of the pastoral *Fulbe* who had responded to the gospel by becoming Christians.

**Structured Interviews**

The mission principles, approaches, and methods used by the mission projects were researched through the use of self-administered questionnaires.⁶ The first five questions were prepared to secure basic information about the interviewee and his/her

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⁶ In general, Hausa was the main language used in the field research. With the questionnaire on mission principles and approaches, however, we allowed the interviewees the choice between English and Hausa, since some of the interviewees with more education preferred to use English (see the English version of the questionnaire in Appendix A).
ministry. Eighteen questions addressed the underlying mission principles.\textsuperscript{7} Forty-five questions focused on fifteen different methods or media with the aim at determining how much each method or media had been used by the mission projects to make the Fulbe aware of the gospel (in the awareness phase), to help them to decide to become Christians (in the conversion phase), and to take care of the new Fulbe converts (in the incorporation phase).\textsuperscript{8} Although it was a self-administrative questionnaire, the interviewee could ask for clarifications from the person who distributed the questionnaire. The sixty-eight questions could be answered in less than an hour.

The spiritual journey of the Christian Fulbe was researched through the use of a questionnaire administered by the research assistants and me. This was a very long questionnaire with altogether 223 questions, divided into four sections.\textsuperscript{9}

After three questions concerning the person completing the questionnaire, the first section consisting of seventeen questions dealt with demographic data. In the second section, with 174 questions, the interviewees were asked to evaluate how much fifty-eight different factors had influenced their spiritual journey in each of the three phases of their conversion process.\textsuperscript{10} The third section was a very short section, in which the interviewees were asked their opinions in response to four questions concerning a possible continuation of certain Islamic practices and the need for Fulbe congregations. The last section was meant to determine their cognitive, affective and behavioral

\textsuperscript{7} The mission principles investigated fall into the following seven categories: (1) Goal, research and general approach; (2) Spiritual basis; (3) The missionaries; (4) Holistic ministry; (5) Approaches and media; (6) The Christian Fulbe and the church; (7) The Christian Fulbe and the Fulbe community.

\textsuperscript{8} The approaches investigated fall into the following three categories: (1) Media; (2) Social services; and (3) Specifically Christian activities.

\textsuperscript{9} See the English translation of the questionnaire in Appendix B.

\textsuperscript{10} These questions fall into the following categories: (1) Mission initiatives; (2) Local congregations and individual Christians; (3) Contextual and personal factors. The questions in category 1 were identical with the questions about media, social services and, specifically Christian activities in the previous questionnaire.
response to the gospel. They were asked to respond to twenty-one statements concerning the Christian faith and their relationship with the church and with the Muslim Fulbe community. The four response options for each question were scrambled in terms of the priority so as to avoid biased responses. It took two hours or more for the interviewers to go through this questionnaire with each interviewee.

**Unstructured Interviews and In-Depth Interviews**

Unstructured interviews were carried out with seventeen people connected with the five mission projects. The purpose was to get more detailed information about the history and present ministry of the mission projects.

In-depth interviews were carried out with fifteen Christian Fulbe, the purpose of which was to collect life stories, or rather aspects of life stories that relate to conversion. In recorded interviews of a half to one hour’s length, I had the Fulbe converts describe and explain in their own words when, how, and why they had become Christians, how they had become incorporated in a local congregation, and how their conversion had affected their relationship with their Fulbe family and community.

The interviewer would only ask the questions necessary to help the interviewees recall what they felt had been the most important elements in their spiritual journey. When the interviewees skipped whole phases or parts of phases of the conversion process, they were asked to go back to try to recall what had happened in those periods.

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11 Many of the questions in the two questionnaires were borrowed from a similar research project called “Movements to Christ among Muslim Peoples in Bangladesh, Nigeria and Ethiopia,” which was sponsored by the PEW Charitable Foundation and conducted by Fuller Theological Seminary. The purpose of this was to facilitate a comparison of results.

12 The distribution of these interviews was as follows: LCCN one, CRCN two, COCIN three, ECWA six, and NBC five.

13 The distribution of these interviews was like this: LCCN four, CRCN two, COCIN three, ECWA three, and NBC three. Two women and thirteen men were interviewed.
Delimitation and Sampling Plan

From the large number of mission projects among Fulbe in Northern Nigeria, I decided to select those projects that fulfilled the following four criteria:

1. The mission project had been in existence for ten years or more.
2. The number of full-time missionaries (Nigerian or expatriate) employed in the project had been two or more during all the last ten years.
3. The main focus of the mission project was pastoral Fulbe.
4. The number of Fulbe converts fulfilling the criteria for eligibility (see below) was ten or more.

Only the mission projects of the following five churches fulfilled all the criteria and were therefore selected for the research: The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN),14 The Christian Reformed Church in Nigeria (CRCN),15 The Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN),16 The Evangelical Church in West Africa (ECWA),17 and The Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC).18

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14 LCCN was founded by a Lutheran mission from Denmark, SUM-D (a member of SUM). LCCN is also working together with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. It is a member of the World Council of Churches and of the Lutheran World Federation. It is also a member of the umbrella-organization called TEKAN, Tarayyar Ekklesiyyoyin Krista a Nigeria (Fellowship of Churches of Christ in Nigeria), the original members of which were churches founded by SUM mission agencies. The headquarters of the church are in Adamawa state, where most of its congregations are located.

15 CRCN was founded by the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in the USA, with whom it still cooperates. CRCN is a member of TEKAN. Its headquarters are in Taraba state, where most of its congregations are located.

16 COCIN was founded by the English branch of SUM, now called Action Partners, with whom it still cooperates. COCIN is a member of TEKAN. The general trend of the theology of COCIN is Baptist. Its headquarters are in Plateau state, where the majority of its congregations are located.

17 ECWA was founded by the Sudan Interior Mission, with whom it still cooperates. The theology of ECWA is conservative and Baptist. The headquarters of ECWA is in Plateau state, but its congregations are spread all over Northern and Western Nigeria.

18 NBC was founded by the American Southern Baptists, with whom it still cooperates. The headquarters of the church are in Western Nigeria, where most of its congregations are located.
From each of the five mission projects, ten people were selected for the structured interview concerning mission principles and mission approaches. The leaders of each project were asked to select ten people who were very familiar with the principles and approaches of the mission project. They were asked to select either missionaries (Nigerian or expatriate), volunteers, or committee members, who had a firsthand experience with the work of the project.

The Christian *Fulbe* selected for research had to fulfill the following criteria:

1. They were considered to be *Fulbe* by *Fulbe* standards, that is, their father was a *Pullo*.

2. They came from a pastoral *Fulbe* background, that is, their father was a nomadic *Pullo*, a semi-nomadic/semi-settled *Pullo*, or a settled *Pullo* with cattle.

3. They were adult first-generation Christians, that is, they had not been brought up in Christian families but had converted to Christianity from Islam.

4. They had been baptized.

5. They were still considered to be living as Christians.

6. They belonged to one of the five churches, and their names and residences were known to leaders of the mission projects.

7. They lived in one of the following seven states: Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Kaduna, Niger, Plateau, or Taraba.

The mission projects of LCCN and CRCN are mainly working in Adamawa and Taraba states respectively. The mission project of COCIN is mainly working in Plateau and Bauchi states. NBC is mainly working in Gombe and Kaduna states. The mission project of ECWA is focusing on Niger state, Plateau state, Kaduna state, and Bauchi

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19 NBC has also been working among *Fulbe* in parts of Kwara state, but has for some years had no Nigerian or expatriate missionaries there. The work in Kwara state falls outside the scope if the present research (see the note 47).
state, but many Christian Fulbe from ECWA are living in other states in Northern Nigeria. For practical reasons, it was therefore decided to limit the research to these seven states in Northern Nigeria.

The vast majority of the Christian Fulbe in the five churches live in these seven states, and most of the activities of the five mission projects are carried out there. These states are all so-called Middle Belt states, that is, states in which neither Islam nor Christianity completely dominates, such as is the case in some Northern and Southern states.20

TABLE 1
CHRISTIAN FULBE IN NIGERIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Christian Fulbe--Estimate21</th>
<th>Adult Baptized Fulbe--Estimate</th>
<th>Sample Frame</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Sample in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LCCN</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRCN</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COCIN</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECWA</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other churches</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>825</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through the help of missionaries and Christian Fulbe, a sampling frame was established for each of the five churches. In that process I collected data, based on which I have made tentative estimates as to the number of Christian Fulbe in Northern Nigeria.

20 Kwara state is part of Northern Nigeria (and also of the Middle Belt). When I refer to the Fulbe in Northern Nigeria (and the Middle Belt), I exclude the Fulbe in Kwara state, because they historically and culturally are more closely related to the Fulbe in Benin than to the Fulbe in the rest of Northern Nigeria.

21 The estimate includes children of Christian Fulbe and non-baptized Fulbe believers.
Even when children of Christian parents and not-yet baptized converts are included, there are probably less than 1000 Christian *Fulbe* in all of Northern Nigeria, as can be seen in Table 1. If only adult Christians who have been baptized are counted, the number is probably less than 500. The sampling frame, consisting of the *Fulbe* who fulfilled the criteria listed above, numbers 119 persons. The first two figures are qualified estimates, whereas the sampling frame figure is very accurate.

The goal was to do structured interviews with about half of the *Fulbe* in the sample frame. These 119 *Fulbe* in the sample frame, however, were scattered throughout numerous local government areas in seven states. Because of limited time and financial means, it was impossible to select interviewees according to a strict probability sample. The representativity of the sample, however, is still very high because we have interviewed fifty percent of the *Fulbe* in the sample frame.

**Life Stories**

I selected the fifteen Christian *Fulbe* interviewed for life stories in such a way that old and young, men and women, new converts and veterans, and all the selected churches were represented. A brief presentation of each of the fifteen Christian *Fulbe* is given below. For security reasons, their names have been replaced with pseudonyms, just as all place names apart from the names of states have been omitted.

Abdullahi, a member of LCCN, is a thirty-five year-old Bible school student in a village in Adamawa state. He was born in Borno to a nomadic *Fulbe* family. His interest in the gospel began four years ago when he was working as a cleaner in a government office in Gombe state. At the same time, he was receiving Islamic training by a *malam*. He was baptized only one year ago. He was married, but his wife left him when he became a Christian.
Ahmed, a member of LCCN, is a thirty-four year-old farmer in a town in Adamawa state. He was born to a semi-nomadic Fulbe family in Adamawa state. He became interested in the gospel eight years ago and was baptized the following year. He has had two years of Bible school training and is not married.

Ali, a member of LCCN, is a twenty-eight year-old man in a town in Adamawa state. He was born to a settled Fulbe family in Adamawa state. He has no more cattle, and is more or less supported by the church. He became interested in the gospel seven years ago and was baptized three years later. He has attended a Qur’anic school, but has no modern schooling. He is married to a non-Fulbe, Christian woman.

Aishatu, a member of LCCN, is a twenty-six year-old woman living in a town in Adamawa state. She was born to a settled Fulbe family in Adamawa state. She has received thirteen years of schooling and is a health worker in the church. She became interested in the gospel eight years ago and was baptized and married to a Christian Pullo three years later.

Buba, a member of CRCN, is a sixty year-old farmer and evangelist in a village in Taraba state. He was born to a nomadic Fulbe family in Kano. He has received five years of schooling. His interest in the gospel started forty years ago, but he was only baptized seventeen years later. He is married to a Christian Fulbe woman, and a number of his relatives are also Christian.

Bello, a member of CRCN, is a thirty year-old evangelist in a village in Taraba state. He was born to a nomadic Fulbe family in Taraba state. His interest in the gospel started seventeen years ago, and he was baptized ten years later. He has received four years of schooling. He was married, but after his baptism his wife and children were taken away from him.

22 Buba had written part of his life story down, and we were able to use this together with the interview.
Dahiru, a member of COCIN, is a seventy-one year-old evangelist in a village in Plateau state. He was born to a nomadic Fulbe family in Plateau state. His interest in the gospel began forty-five years ago, when he was a shepherd. Eleven years later he settled down and was baptized. His wife is a Christian, Fulbe woman. His only education is three months of Bible school.

Dawda, a member of COCIN, is a forty-seven year-old pastor in a town in Bauchi state. He was born to a family of settled Fulbe in Gombe state. He became interested in the gospel twenty-five years ago and was baptized two years later. He attended Bible school for a couple of years and was later trained as a pastor. After his conversion, he married a non-Fulbe, Christian woman.

Mamudu, a COCIN member, is a fifty-five year-old Christian Religious Knowledge teacher in a primary school in a town in Plateau state. He was born to a settled Fulbe family in Plateau state. He became interested in the gospel twenty-two years ago and was baptized the following year. He has received one year of Bible school education. He married a Fulbe woman when he became a Christian, but his wife did not become a Christian until some time later.

Yakubu, a member of ECWA, is a thirty year-old evangelist in a town in Gombe state. He was born to a settled Fulbe family in Gombe state. Apart from Qur’anic schooling, he has received eleven years of school education. His interest in the gospel began eleven years ago, and the following year he was baptized. He is not married.

Umaru, a member of ECWA, is a forty-six year-old pastor in a town in Plateau state. He was born to a semi-nomadic family in Kano state. His interest in the gospel began when he was only twelve years old, and he was baptized when he was nineteen years old. He completed his primary school education as an adult and recently graduated from a theological seminary. He is married to a Christian, Fulbe woman.
Zeinabu, a member of ECWA, is a thirty-eight year-old Bible school teacher in Plateau state. She was born to a semi-nomadic family in Kano state. After her mother’s and father’s death, when she was still a child, she became seriously sick, but was healed in the care of a missionary woman. She became interested in the gospel when she was twelve years old, and she was baptized seven years later. She has received four years of Bible school education. She is divorced from her Muslim, Fulbe husband, but her two sons are Christians.

Gidado, a member of NBC, is a forty-six year-old evangelist in a town in Gombe state. He was born to a nomadic family in Gombe state. He began taking interest in the gospel eighteen years ago, and he was baptized two years later. Apart from a thorough Qur’anic training, he has received five years of Bible school education. He is married to a non-Fulbe, Christian woman.

Lawal, a member of NBC, is a thirty-one year-old pastor in a town in Kaduna state. He was born to a nomadic family in Katsina state. His interest in the gospel started when he was only fourteen years old, and he was baptized nine years later. He has received nine years of schooling and is married to a non-Fulbe, Christian woman.

Bakari, a member of NBC, is a thirty-seven year-old health worker in a town in Gombe state. He was born to settled Fulbe family in Gombe state. He has received twelve years of schooling, including primary and secondary school, Arabic Teachers College, and a health education. Before becoming a Christian, he had joined the Izala group, and later the Shi’a group, in a big city. His interest in the gospel began five years ago, and he was baptized the following year. While he was a Muslim, he married a Christian woman (who converted to Islam); he later was divorced from her. Now he is not married.
Data Collection

In May 1998, thirteen research assistants were called together for a one week training seminar in Jos, Plateau state. All but one were (or had been) involved in 
*Fulbe* mission in the five churches whose mission projects were to be researched. Seven of the assistants were Christian *Fulbe*, most of whom had only received Bible school training. Five were Christians from other ethnic groups, who all had received post-secondary training. Two were expatriate missionaries. Two had previously been involved in sociological research.

During this seminar, the purpose and methodology of the research was explained and discussed. Both questionnaires had been translated from English to Hausa by a translator from the Bible Society of Nigeria. The reason it was decided to use Hausa as the main language of research instead of *Fulfulde* was that most *Fulbe* understand Hausa, and not all the research assistants were fluent in *Fulfulde*. All five mission projects use both *Fulfulde* and Hausa in their communication with the *Fulbe*, but as soon as the *Fulbe* enter the church they are immersed in the Hausa language, and Hausa becomes their religious language.

The translation of each question was discussed until an agreement concerning the proper translation had been reached. In the process, both questionnaires were pre-tested before they were given their final form.

From the middle of May to the end of June of 1998, the research assistants conducted the questionnaire interviews with the Christian *Fulbe*. Each team consisted of a research assistant who knew the interviewee and a research assistant from another mission project. The research assistants personally interviewed the Christian *Fulbe* and

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23 One of the research assistants was from the *Ekklesiyan ‘Yan’uwa a Nigeria* (The Brethren Church in Nigeria, EYN), which we originally had hoped to include in the research. The EYN mission project was not included because it did not fulfill the criteria.
distributed and collected the self-administered questionnaires among the people involved in the mission projects.

All the in-depth interviews with Christian Fulbe (for life stories), all the interviews with key leaders in the mission projects, and thirteen of the questionnaire interviews with Christian Fulbe were carried out by me personally. When the I did not know the interviewee personally, I was accompanied by a missionary who knew the person. All the interviews were conducted in the period between the middle of May and the end of July, 1998.

Analysis of the Data

All data from the questionnaire interviews were analyzed by the use of ABstat, which is a statistics computer program. Special analyses were made using various subsets where, for example, specific demographic data were correlated with certain responses.

The original intention was to compare the responses from the five mission projects in order to see if conclusions could be drawn concerning the effect of different principles, approaches and methods used in different churches. The number of Fulbe respondents from each mission project, however, was so small (from nine to fourteen) that I concluded the reliability would be too low. During the research, we discovered that a number of the converts had been in contact with more than one mission project during their spiritual journey, and most of the converts had been influenced in their spiritual journey by many factors other than the initiatives taken by the mission projects. Therefore, I decided to indicate (most often in footnotes) only where significant differences between the five mission projects were registered.
The fifteen life story interviews were analyzed separately for some of the most significant themes in each of the three conversion phases. The life story material was both too limited and not representative enough to make any statistical conclusions, but as qualitative material it was used to elucidate some of the dynamics in the spiritual journey of the *Fulbe* that were indicated in the quantitative material.

**Reliability and Validity**

With the pre-testing of the questionnaires, the thorough instruction of the research assistants, and the composition of the interview teams, it seems reasonable to conclude that the reliability of the survey data is very high. The same type of questionnaire has been used in similar research projects about evaluating conversion of Muslims in Africa and Asia and seems to be an effective tool to obtain reliable data about conversions.

In the case of the questionnaire about mission principles, approaches and methods, the interviewees were asked to put their own name on the questionnaire. I knew most of the respondents personally, I was familiar with the projects, and in some cases I interviewed them about their work. Therefore, there is reason to believe that they gave honest answers.

Present at each questionnaire interview with the Christian *Fulbe* was a person whom the interviewee knew very well. The presence of this familiar person was meant to help the interviewee feel secure in the interviewing situation. In each case, the spiritual journey of the interviewee was known to one of the interviewers, and a person was present who was not involved in the *Fulbe* mission project of the church to which the

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*Fulbe* convert belonged. All these procedures were intended to secure a high level of validity and reliability in the data.
CHAPTER 4
THE HISTORY AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE
PASTORAL FULBE SOCIETY

The sociological context of communication in general and of cross-cultural communication of the gospel in particular is very important. In the words of David Filbeck,

For a missionary to understand communication, especially cross-cultural communication, he must first understand the basis on which communication takes place. . . . What is the foundation on which a message is transmitted and received? More precisely, where does a person begin in communicating with another, and on what basis does the other person receive and interpret the communication? The answer is to be found in the way society, of both the communicator and the receiver, is organized. The social organization of the participants, in other words, forms the foundation which underlies communication, the transmission and receiving of messages from one person to another (1985:3).

Therefore, if we are to communicate the gospel to the pastoral Fulbe in Northern Nigeria, we have to understand the context in which they live and in which their interaction with the gospel and the church takes place.

In this chapter, the social context will be analyzed, and in the next chapter the focus will be the religious context of the pastoral Fulbe. First, I will present a brief overview of the history of the Fulbe in Nigeria in order to show how their identity has been shaped through history. Then the social organization of the pastoral Fulbe society and the effects of modernization on this society will be analyzed. This analysis will provide an understanding of the life situation of the pastoral Fulbe, their felt needs and
aspirations, and other socio-cultural factors that have to be considered when developing strategies for a contextual communication of the gospel.

The History of Fulbe in Northern Nigeria

Although the origin of the Fulbe has attracted the attention of many ethnographers and historians, little is known, according to reliable historical sources, about their existence before they are found with their cattle around the Senegal River in the 10th century. Before presenting the documented history of the Fulbe, I will give a brief introduction to their mythical past, which also has influenced their self-understanding.

The Mythical Past

According to their own legends the Fulbe are descendants of Arabs entering Africa. This may be the reason Arabs are not grouped with the non-Fulbe people identified by the derogatory term Haabe (plural of Kaado). White people are also exempted from the term Haabe, but are called Nasaaraa’en (plural of Nasaaraajo) from the Arabic word for Christians. The term Haabe has therefore come to mean the Negroid, non-Fulbe, neighboring ethnic groups, to whom the Fulbe feel superior. Another key element in all their creation myths is cattle, which was given to the Fulbe to look after in the bush. This attachment to cattle sets them apart from their neighbors, just as does their alleged Arabic origin (Labatut 1975:72-84).

The ancient myths collected by Bâ give insight into the pre-Islamic religion of the Fulbe. Geno is the eternal and almighty creator, keeper and destroyer, who gives and takes life, but who is not worshipped. Worshipped are the supernatural spirits and divinities that are “emanations” from Geno. In the cosmology of the Fulbe, there are, apart from the realm of Geno, three spheres. In the “land of clarity” live human beings together with animals and plants. In the “land of semi-darkness” reign the divinities and
spirits, and in the “land of the deep night” rest the souls of the dead and of those who are
to be born—the souls of human beings and of animals and plants. The spirits may
incarnate themselves and appear to human beings in the “land of clarity” (1972:114-117;
1978:9-11, 18-20).

The Kumen myth, which has been analyzed by R. Nelson (1997:64-79), is the
most important myth and will therefore be briefly analyzed here because it reveals the
perspective of life of the pastoral Fulbe before the Islamization. The main character in
this myth, which describes initiation into knowledgeable herdmanship, is Sile Sajo who is
led by a deity, called Kumen, through twelve “glades” in the mystical wilderness. In the
first glade Kumen introduces Sile to Geno, who asks Sile what he wants him to do for
him. Sile replies that he wants to increase his knowledge and to become a good
herdsman and a priest, *silatigi*. Then Geno allows him to pass on working through the
glades and increasing his knowledge through the journey.

After having met the creator himself, he now is introduced to the four elements in
creation (earth, air, fire, and water), and the ordering of these elements. In the tenth
glade, he is introduced to Kumen’s wife Foroforondu, but he is warned that he will be
lost if he submits to her orders. Sile stands firm, and Foroforondu leads him to the
eleventh and the twelfth glade. The content of the twelfth glade, which is the most
significant, is summarized by R. Nelson.

In the twelfth glade are large trees, two termite hills, two ant hills, a pool
and a hermaphrodite bovine standing under the tree. After some ritual,
Sile goes through a ‘new birth’ as a calf comes out of the pool while he
ritually bathes in it. Foroforondu gets milk from the bovine and Sile
drinks it. He then tells the significance of 28 knots on a magic rope, and
receives gifts for each correct answer. Finally he receives authority from
Kumen and Foroforondu, symbolized by Foroforondu’s ring and two
herding staffs: one female and the other male. It is because of his occult
knowledge that he is able to kill the lion on the way home (1997:69).
In his analysis of this myth, R. Nelson detects, in the twelfth glade, a central tripole of (1) the hermaphrodite bovine, (2) Kumen’s wife Foroforondu, and (3) Sile/Kumen\(^1\) with separate competencies and responsibilities. The bovine produces milk and thereby sustains life. Foroforondu, who was in charge of the ceremonies in the eleventh and the twelfth glade, has all the power over fertility, reproduction and food. Sile/Kumen exercises authority over Foroforondu and provides protection and care. Now Sile is prepared to return from the “land of semidarkness” to the “land of clarity,” the land of people. After having participated in Kumen’s mythical tripole, he is now equipped to participate in the tripole of cattle, wife, and herder. The interpretation of R. Nelson is that this tripole is a network of interdependence.

Sile depends on Cattle for milk, strength, self respect. Sile depends on Wife for fertility: both human and bovine, milk production, food preparation, care of sacred objects, magic for finding good pasture. Cattle depends on Sile for pasture, water, protection against natural and spiritual forces. Wife depends on Sile for direction, protection against natural and spiritual forces (1997:71).

Through his initiation, Sile has learned not only about the negative forces endangering the life of the *Fulbe* (such as certain evil spirits, malevolent deities, wild animals, and evil people), but also, and more importantly, about the positive forces at his disposal. Among the positive forces that through his knowledge may come to his aid and protection are Kumen and other deities, certain spirits, amulets, rituals, and magical objects. The myth also outlines the virtues of a *Pullo*. An ideal *Pullo* is a man whose main ambition is to know how to keep cattle and be a priest, and who will defend the cow.

\(^1\) In Nelson’s analysis, Sile and Kumen are taken as one pole in the tripole, because Kumen, although he is a divine offspring of Geno, is working in close relationship to Sile, whom he initiates into herdmanship. Kumen, being a super-herdsman, is a sort of a spiritual double of Sile.
Having described the mythical past of the Fulbe, I will outline the development of the Fulbe people of historical times who lived in what is today Northern Nigeria. I will use the historical periodization that the Fulbe in Northern Nigeria and Cameroon themselves have used (cf. Bossoro and Mohammadou 1977).

**The Period of Migrations**

In the 11th century, a group of sedentary Fulbe (to be known as the Torodbe) were converted to Islam and became some of the chief propagators of Islam throughout West Africa in the following years, whereas the nomadic Fulbe continued to follow their pre-Islamic religion for many centuries. Very early, the Fulbe began their long migration eastward, a migration which is still in progress. At the beginning of the 14th century, the first Fulbe reached Hausa land, which is today part of Northern Nigeria.

**The Period of Ignorance 1450-1600**

In the following two hundred years the Fulbe established themselves in Hausa land and Borno, and soon they started to move southwards to the area that was to become known as Fombina, the south-lands (today’s Adamawa and Taraba states). The vast majority of the Fulbe in this period were animistic nomads and semi-nomads.

**The Period of Trials 1650-1850**

The relationship between the Fulbe and the autochthonous ethnic groups varied from place to place. The Fulbe herders needed pasture land, and to gain access to pasture land they had to acknowledge the autochthonous authorities and pay tribute and grazing dues, and in some cases they also had to accept Haabe customs that were against their
own traditions. Towards the end of the 18th century, tensions between the *Fulbe* herders and the *Haabe* authorities increased and sometimes erupted in serious, violent conflicts.2

**The Period of Islamic Rule 1809-1903**

Following on the heels of the nomadic *Fulbe*, groups of *Torodbe* entered Hausa land and became very active in the Islamization of the area. As in other parts of West Africa, the rulers who accepted Islam did not follow the *Shari’a*, but mixed Islamic practices with the practices of their traditional religion. From this *Torodbe* class emerged a number of politico-religious leaders who in the 18th and 19th century initiated jihads against ruling powers and who were considered to be *kafir*, infidels, either because they were pagans or because they practiced a syncretistic form of Islam. Levtzion observes,

Most--perhaps all--the jihad movements in West Africa were carried out by Fulfulde-speaking groups, including *Fulbe* pastoralists and Torodbe or Toronkawa scholars. The latter gave the ideological and organizational leadership to the former. This pattern is consistent with a more general pattern in the history of Islamic militant movements--that of radical scholars who mobilized culturally related pastoralists whose warlike potential had not been fully employed politically because of their segmentary system (1987:22-23).

This was also the case with the jihad of Shehu Dan Fodio. In 1804, Dan Fodio, a *Torodbe* cleric in the Hausa state of Gobir, started his preaching. Initially he directed his preaching against the *Fulbe* nomads and semi-nomads, most of whom were either pagan or only superficially Muslim. But soon the un-Islamic practices of the ruling Hausa people became the target of his preaching, and in 1809, war broke out.

In the initial stages of the war, the *Fulbe* nomads were reluctant to join the jihad, but they eventually supported Dan Fodio (though not confidently), not for religious

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2 The development of the relationship between the *Fulbe* and the autochthonous groups in one area of what is today Northern Nigeria, namely *Fombina* (what later became the Adamawa lamidate), has been analyzed by Abubakar (1977:29-42).
reasons, but for ethnic reasons (interpreting the hostility of *Haabe* rulers as directed against all *Fulbe*), for political reasons (expecting protection of their grazing rights), and for economic reasons (hoping for abolishment of the *Haabe* taxation on their cattle, *jangali*, which had become virtually unbearable by the end of the 18th century). When Dan Fodio died in 1817, most of what is today Northern Nigeria (apart from Borno) had been brought together in the Sokoto caliphate (Last 1979:4-8; Tringham 1962:199-200; Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966:121; Adebayo 1995:122).

Hogben and Kirk-Greene, in agreement with other scholars, summarize the causes of this revolutionary movement by pointing to religious, social and ethnic motives:

There was undoubtedly the driving motive of the Shehu and his modibbe to reform the lax standards of Muslim life among the Habe rulers. . . . The aim was to reform not only the morals but the institutions in accordance with the precepts of Islam. Apart from this, however, the revolution sprang from mis-government. The Shehu had a large measure of support from the peasants and small traders, who were finding injustice and oppression intolerable: few of these burned with religious zeal. And then there was the feeling of racial consciousness among the Fulani as a whole --from the malamai, who deplored the crudities of pagan practices, to the herdsmen in the bush, who needed the protection of their kinsmen at court (1966:141).

The jihad led to the establishment of the Muslim *Fulbe* Sokoto caliphate. The result was that the *Fulbe*, who before the jihad had been excluded from power, now came into power. Together with the Hausa people, under the uniting umbrella of Islam, they came to form a new Hausa-*Fulbe* political leadership. The sedentary *Fulbe* in general and the *Torodbe* in particular intermarried with the Hausa people, and socially, politically, and religiously they became more and more united with the Hausa people. For these *Fulbe*, Hausa became the main means of communication, and many *Fulbe* cultural customs were replaced by Hausa customs (Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966:428).

For the pastoral *Fulbe*, the jihad brought both advantages and disadvantages. Before the jihad, the *Fulbe* were a subject people not allowed to own slaves, but after the
jihad a number of pastoralists came to own slaves, who were occupied both in farming and herding. Some pastoralists settled near Sokoto and other walled towns in order to be near the Shehu, his successors, and his emirs. Some of the pastoralists became learned in Islam. Another reason for their staying near the walled towns was the instability that the jihad brought. This instability restricted cattle movements and led to the development of the Rinderpest epidemics of 1887-1891, in which many cattle died. Furthermore, the jihad state did not abolish the cattle tax (jangali), but rather it insisted that the tax was obligatory under Islamic law. The tax varied from one emirate to the other, according to each emirate’s financial needs. A typical rate, however, was the payment of one cow per thirty cattle (including calves) (Ezeomah 1983:2-3; Adebayo 1995:122-123; Raay 1975:21-22).3

One of the most far-reaching consequences of the jihad for the pastoral Fulbe was their inclusion in an Islamic empire. The later encounter with the colonial power and with modernization did not affect the pastoral Fulbe’s religious development very much. What continued, however, to impact them after Northern Nigeria had been conquered by the British was their incorporation in the Islamic state at the beginning of last century. Forty years ago, Stenning pointed out,

“Social change” for the Wodaabe, as for many another Pastoral Fulani communities does not lie, even today, in the impact of Western technology, modes of distribution, and the new forms of social organizations and ideology attendant upon them. The main manifestations

3 There is some disagreement as to the overall impact of the jihad on the life of the pastoral Fulbe. Hans G. T. van Raay concludes that the jihad “made life considerably more agreeable for the pastoralists,” because they now had better opportunity to acquire land and slaves. Together with the frequent insecurity that continued from the time of the jihad up to the British occupation, these factors “all combined to produce a further differentiation among the Fulani in that an increasing number established more permanent ties with their environment” (1975:21-21). Adebayo (1995:123), however, is of the opinion that the jihad did not lead to any economic improvement for the pastoral Fulbe. On the contrary, the high rate of cattle tax in some emirates led many pastoralists to “evade this tax by choosing more benevolent hosts. It was probably this flight to evade tax which, more than the atmosphere of peace that resulted from the establishment of the caliphate, was responsible for the dispersal of Fulani pastoralists in Northern Nigeria.”
of social change for the Wodaabe are their incorporation into an Islamic state organization, administrative system and ritual idiom, with which, until the post-war period, British administration had little concern. This for the Wodaabe, has been a slow process, lasting for perhaps a century and a half (1959:25).

The Colonial Period 1903-1960

When the British declared Northern Nigeria, including the Sokoto caliphate, a British protectorate, neither the caliph in Sokoto nor the emirs were able to withstand the superior British military power. The first British High Commissioner, F. Lugard, considering how to administer the vast protectorate, realized that this could not be done by direct rule. The Sokoto caliphate, however, already had developed a fairly efficient system of government, which the British took over. This system of government left the Fulbe caliph and the emirs with considerable power. As long as they obeyed the colonial masters and their laws, they were supported by the colonial power. In some areas this even led to a situation in which ethnic groups that had not formerly been conquered by the emirs now came under their control. The effect of the indirect rule in the colonial period was also a strengthening of Islam.4

For the pastoral Fulbe, the British occupation of Nigeria meant that they lost all of their slaves; the nomadic Fulbe lost the slaves who had assisted them in herding and the semi-nomadic Fulbe lost the slaves who had assisted them in herding as well as in farming. On the other hand, they welcomed the stability and security that the British brought, and they took it as an opportunity to move throughout Northern Nigeria in their search for good pasture and water (Ezeomah 1983:3).

4 In 1902, Lugard had promised the emir of Adamawa that the “Government will in no way interfere with the Mohammedan religion. All men are free to worship God as they please. Mosques and prayer places will be treated with respect by us” (Boer 1979:69). This promise was interpreted by Lugard not as a general prohibition of Christian mission in Muslim areas, but as an agreement that missionaries could work in Muslim areas, only if the local emir would agree to it. This also applied to the non-Muslim areas that had been brought under the control of the Muslim emirs (Crampton 1978:48; M. Jensen 1992:20).
The new colonial masters continued to levy the *jangali* among the *Fulbe*, and this strained the relationship between the pastoralists and the state. The state collected the cattle tax, sometimes even by force, and the pastoralists tried by all means to evade this tax. Therefore, the nomadic and semi-nomadic *Fulbe* became suspicious of all government officials (and to a certain extent they were suspicious of the veterinary officers also) and would not reveal the exact number of their cattle to any stranger (Adebayo 1995:131-138).

Mahdism,⁵ which in Northern Nigeria dates back to the time of Dan Fodio, experienced a resurgence during the colonial rule. The Mahdist ideology had legitimated the jihad and the setting up of the caliphate as a preparation for the coming of the Mahdi and the end time. Now Mahdists identified the British colonialists with the *Dajal*, the Anti-Christ, against whom the Mahdi and his followers had to fight. In the first decades of this century, dozens of people claimed to be the Mahdi or his *Mujaddid*, but without much success. In recent years, many adherents of the *Mahdiyya* movement have joined the *Tijaniyya*, but without giving up their convictions about the Mahdi.⁶ Many *Fulbe* have been involved in this *Mahdiyya* movement. Hinds concludes,

> The men who are attracted to this Mahdi are mainly Fulani speakers but men who have no deep knowledge of Islam. They may be men who have lost their cattle through the drought or are just bewildered by the modern age. They may be originally slave people who see no future for themselves in this present world. At least they have one thing in common.

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⁵ The doctrine of the Mahdi is not found in the *Qur’an* or in the *Hadith*, but it has played a significant role among *Fulbe* and other Muslims in Northern Nigeria as well as in all of Islam. Many orthodox Muslims believe that the Mahdi (who might be called the Islamic Messiah) will drive out the Anti-Christ, who will come before him, and will rule justly for a period of 1000 years until the day of judgment. Some Muslims believed that Dan Fodio was the Mahdi, but he denied it and indicated that he might be a *Mujaddid*, the “Renewer of the Faith” who is a forerunner of the Mahdi. It is believed that at the beginning of every century (according the Islamic calendar) God will send a learned man to the people to renew their faith and to set things right in society. The last of these reformers will usher in the Mahdi (Hiskett 1973:120-125).

⁶ This transition has been facilitated by the fact that both the *Mahdiyya* and the *Tijaniyya* pray with their arms crossed.
A hope for one who will fill the earth with justice and equity as it has been filled with injustice and oppression (n.d.:11).

**The Period of Independence Beginning in 1960**

When Nigeria, in 1960, gained its independence, the Hausa-Fulbe elite in Northern Nigeria retained much of its political power, and even exerted a decisive influence on the national politics. The pastoral Fulbe in this period were increasingly becoming affected by the modern society, and they were facing a stronger and stronger pressure to change their life-style. The effects of modernization, however, will be discussed later in this chapter after the analysis of the social organization of the pastoral Fulbe society.

Sufism, in the form of the Qadiriyya tariqa\(^7\) or the Tijaniyya tariqa,\(^8\) has been practiced by some pastoral Fulbe for centuries, but especially in this century, tariqa membership has increased considerably. Traditionally Qadiriyya was the Fulbe tariqa *par excellence*, especially for the Torodbe, but today Tijaniyya also has many Fulbe adherents, including pastoral Fulbe. For the masses the main attraction to Sufism\(^9\) was

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7 The *Qadiriyya tariqa* was founded by Abd al-Qadir (1077-1166) in Baghdad and according to tradition established in Kano in around 1610 by al-Maghili (Hiskett 1984:246-248). Dan Fodio belonged to the *Qadiriyya tariqa*.

8 The *Tijaniyya tariqa* was founded by Ahmad al-Tijani (1737-1815) in Algeria and reached Hausa-land in the beginning of the nineteenth century.

9 In his book *Raf al-ishtiha*, Muhammed Bello distinguishes between various Sufi masters: “Sufis who intercede for many people of their community; Sufis who intercede for people of their own time; sufis who intercede for anyone who hears his name; sufis who intercede for anyone who prays behind them; sufis who intercede for anyone who reads their books; sufis who intercede for anyone buried near their graves; sufis who intercedes for anyone who believes in them” (Paden 1973:66). Apart from “spiritual salvation,” Sufism is also attractive because it offers “material salvation,” connected with the *baraka* of the sufi leaders. The *malamai* of both Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya turuq are skilled in the techniques of healing and spiritual protection and in helping people through prayers (*du’a*). Paden in 1970 collected 300 handwritten secrets (*sirr*) prepared by sufi *malamai* in Kano which promised to help people with a variety of problems. The major categories were: “success in business and commerce; success in love, marriage, and family affairs; success in social life, learning, and curing disease; protection against disease, protection against bodily harm; protection against the evil intentions of others (including ‘kings’); protection against dangers of traveling; protection against animals; protection against jinn” (1973:127).
probably the intercession of the shaykh, which guaranteed salvation after death and escape from judgment.

The radicalization of sections of Muslims in Northern Nigeria, which has taken place within the last two or three decades, has also influenced the pastoral Fulbe. The radical Islamic group of Izala\(^\text{10}\) (and to a lesser extent Shi’\(^\text{11}\)a) has also found many adherents among young Fulbe who have moved to town.\(^\text{12}\) The violent conflicts between Christian and Muslim groups in various parts of Northern Nigeria during the last twenty years have brought an even greater separation between the Muslims, including the Fulbe, and the Christians. This has made it even more difficult for a Pullo to become a Christian.

**The Social Organization of the Pastoral Fulbe Society in Northern Nigeria**

Today’s pastoral Fulbe society is a product of this long history of the Fulbe in Northern Nigeria and the Fulbe’s interaction with the neighboring ethnic groups. In this

\(^{10}\) The Izala group, Izalatul Bid’a wa Iqamat al Sunna, was founded by Malam Ismaili Idris with the support of Sheikh Abubakar Gumi in 1973. They worked for the purification of Islam, abolition of innovations (bid’\(\)a\) ) and a strict observance of Islam in accordance with the Qur’an and the Sunna. They therefore fought the turq and treated their followers as infidels (Kantiok n.d.:102; Gilliland 1986:191).

\(^{11}\) The Shi’\(\)a group in Northern Nigeria was formed in the early 1980s by Ibrahim El-Zakzaky. The group’s doctrines are based on the Iranian revolution and the group is much more aggressive and violent than the Izala movement (Kantiok n.d.:103).

\(^{12}\) Bakari (1998), a young man from the Bokoloji clan who had attended Arabic Teacher’s College and later was trained as a medical lab technician, joined an Izala group in Gombe. He did not respect his parents as true Muslims, so he refused to drink the milk offered to him by his mother and the meat from animals slaughtered by his father. In his opinion, they were infidels, worse than Christians. Among the Fulbe elders and their religious leaders, these radical Muslims are very unpopular. A striking example of their dissatisfaction with this form of Islam is seen from the response from a famous religious leader to a pastoral Fulbe father who was very sad and ashamed because his son had become a Christian. “You would really have reason to be sad if your son had joined the Izala group. Then I would shed more tears than you do. But since he has entered the Christian religion, and he is holding to the truth in it, you just leave him. God knows what must be done. Leave him, and do not worry” (Dawda 1998).
section the social organization of the pastoral *Fulbe* society in Northern Nigeria today will be analyzed.

Filbeck defines a society as “a large group of people internally organized to live in an environment” (1985:7). The physical environment in which the pastoral *Fulbe* live is the bush in the Savanna belt of Northern Nigeria. A key component of the environment of all pastoral *Fulbe* is the cattle to which they are closely attached.\(^\text{13}\)

The cattle also play a significant role in the social organization of the *Fulbe*. The status of individual *Fulbe* in society is to a large extent determined by their relation to cattle. Most of the elements of the behavioral code of the *Fulbe* (*Pulaaku*) are directly or indirectly related to their concern for their cattle.

Ownership of cattle gives membership in the society and their loss results in expulsion. Membership in the society places an individual under the obligation to live according to a strict code of conduct. . . . Serious breaches of this code are believed to cause a reduction in the fertility and milk yield as well as an increase in the mortality of the herd upon which the offender is dependent (Hopen 1958:27).

The society to which the pastoral *Fulbe* belong may be characterized as a kinship society, whereas the society from which the European or American missionaries come is a modern society, and the society from which the Nigerian missionaries come most often is a peasant society.\(^\text{14}\) These differences in the sociological base of communication must

\(^\text{13}\) The significance of cattle is evident from the following *Fulbe* proverbs: “If one harms the cattle, one harms the *Fulbe*,” “If the cattle die, the *Fulbe* will die,” and “Cattle surpass (in the widest sense) everything, they are even greater than one’s father and mother” (Hopen 1958:26).

\(^\text{14}\) A kinship society (Filbeck uses the term tribal society) is a holistic society, which means that “all social institutions are (1) highly integrated and interrelated, and (2) the functional load of maintaining society is distributed more or less equally throughout all five institutions” (Filbeck 1958:34). A peasant society is a ‘part society’ “dependent on an elite or dominating society. . . . While peasants are self-sufficient, their society is not. As a society peasants are dependent on the urban elite who are economically and politically more powerful” (Filbeck 1958:34). A modern society is a society in which “all social institutions have each become highly ‘institutionalised’, i.e., they are highly visible in society and are largely autonomous in relation to one another.” And “the two social institutions of government and economics share the heaviest, or most important, functional load in maintaining society with education not far behind” (Filbeck 1985:34).
be taken into consideration when a strategy of contextual communication of the gospel is designed. In particular, it is important to remember that although the gospel is addressed not to societies but to individuals, these individuals are individuals in a society. As Filbeck puts it, “The gospel is received and interpreted both on the basis on how society is organized and how an individual has interacted with his social organization” (1985:54).

In the following, the social institutions that contribute to the functioning and maintenance of the pastoral Fulbe society will be analyzed. The analysis of the social institution of religion, however, will not be treated until in the next chapter.

**Economics**

Historically, Fulbe have been known mainly as pastoral nomads. Pastoralists may be defined as people “who are principally dependent on livestock,” and nomads may be defined as people “for whom spatial mobility is regularly employed as a survival strategy” (Awogbade 1991:1). Pastoralism as well as nomadism is found in various degrees among different groups of Fulbe, and forms of pastoralism and nomadism are sometimes combined with forms of agriculture. Livestock rearing may be associated with sedentism or with nomadism, but the more dependent a society is on livestock as its only livelihood, the greater the tendency toward some degree of nomadism (Awogbade 1991:1-3).

The social institution of economics in the pastoral Fulbe society differs significantly from the corresponding institution in an agricultural society to which most

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15 I follow Filbeck’s definitions of the institutions: (1) Economics is the social institution that takes care of the production and distribution of goods and services throughout society. (2) The family is the social institution that provides new members of the society, nurtures the young, defines kinship obligations and privileges, and cares for the old. (3) Education is the social institution that spreads knowledge and skills to the members of society. (4) Government as the social institution that fulfills the function of maintaining law and order in society. (5) Religion is the social institution that provides “a rationale for group cohesion, including an explanation of one’s ultimate destiny as a member of the group” (1985:25-26).
of the members in the five churches belong. An understanding of this difference is of
great importance for effective communication of the gospel to the pastoral Fulbe in all
three phases of conversion. How and where can the missionaries meet the pastoralists
with the gospel? What are the economic implications of a decision to become a
Christian? How should pastoralists gain their livelihood after they have become
Christians? Questions like these, which form the background for the following analysis
of the economy of a pastoral Fulbe society, are crucial for the development of strategies
of contextual communication of the gospel to pastoral Fulbe in Northern Nigeria today.

**Fulbe Movements**

The Fulbe have been a very mobile people due to their original pastoral life-style. The reason for the movements of the pastoral nomads, however, is not only the
exploitation of pastures. As Moses O. Awogbade puts it, “a unique constellation of
ecological, political and economic factors determine the patterns of movement of each
pastoral society” (1991:2). The different types of Fulbe movements are transhumance,
migratory drift, and migration.

Transhumance is “the regular shifting of people and herds from one locality to
another in response to the seasonal demands” (Stenning 1960:139). Transhumance is
brought about by the ecological conditions under which the Fulbe herders raise their
Zebu cattle\(^\text{16}\) in the Savanna zone of West Africa. The herders, looking for pasture and
water in areas that are free from the tsetse flies (carriers of human sleeping sickness and
Bovine Trypanosomiasis), move their cattle southward (or nearer the rivers) in the dry

\(^{16}\) The cattle of the Fulbe belong to the humped Zebu species (*bos indicus*). The most well-known type of Zebu cattle is the Mbororo Zebu (mainly kept by Mbororo’en), which is known for its long horns. The other common type is the Fulbe Zebu (Dupire 1962:16-20).
season in response to shortage of pasture and water, and northward (or into mountainous areas) in the wet season to avoid the tsetse flies (Stenning 1960:145-146).

This transhumance movement may extend over several hundred kilometers, or it may only be a short distance depending on the distance of a river area to a mountain area. In the cool wet season, herding is easy and can be done near to camp, whereas in the hot dry season the herds are dispersed because the search for good pasture and water is much more difficult.

Migratory drift is “a gradual displacement of the transhumance routes that results eventually in a completely new geographic setting for a particular group” (Stenning 1960:139). Due to climatic changes, extension of farmland, markets changes, and political changes, Fulbe herders may over one or more generations change their transhumance patterns. In Nigeria, the general trend in the migratory drifts have been from northwest to southeast.

Migration is “a dramatic shift in transhumance patterns for a specific cause” (Stenning 1960:139). Transhumance and migratory drift are caused mainly by ecological factors; migration can also be caused by ecological factors, but the ecological factors causing migration would likely involve catastrophic ecological changes. The Rinderpest epidemic in Northern Nigeria from 1887-1891 sent pastoral Fulbe on the flight to escape the epidemic. The famine in Borno in 1913 was the major cause of the migration of many pastoral Fulbe to Adamawa.

The typical Fulbe migration (perol), however, is carried out in response to intolerable political conditions. All over West and Central Africa, the Fulbe have been minorities among sedentary populations, without ownership of the land they use for grazing. When the conditions for the use of this land become intolerable, or when farmers take over too many grazing areas for cultivation, Fulbe herders decide to leave
the area. In the same way, when taxation becomes intolerable, they respond by fleeing the political unit (Stenning 1960:140-157; Maliki 1992:3-8; Bocquené 1986:143-144).

**Differentiation of Fulbe Societies**

In the process of moving from Senegal into other regions of the West and Central African savannas, different groups began to appear within the *Fulbe* society. Three groups were distinguished according to their degree of attachment to pastoral nomadism. This differentiation within the *Fulbe* society was brought about by a number of factors. Some *Fulbe* groups gave up nomadism, because they found good pasturage where they could settle down more permanently. In other cases a serious cattle decline was brought about by disease or other accidents, so that the *Fulbe* could no longer rely entirely on their cattle for subsistence.

Sedentarization among *Fulbe* has also been encouraged by Islam. When Islam in the eleventh century entered West Africa, the *Fulbe* were the first people to embrace this new religion, and they became some of the most ardent propagators of Islam in many parts of West Africa.

Islam is not merely a religion but a complete culture, and those nomadic *Fulbe* who embraced it tended to devote more of their time to Islamic observances and less to cattle husbandry. They moved from one Malam to another in search of education till they themselves became “learned” (*Modibbe*). They then settled down with their dependants, as teachers, judges, advisers to local rulers, or simply as worshippers (*Torobe*). Those who did not take Islam so seriously continued as pastoral nomads, practicing their traditional customs (Abubakar 1977:28).

The three major groups of *Fulbe* that evolved may be called the nomadic *Fulbe* (*Mbororo’en*), the semi-nomadic *Fulbe* (*Fulbe Na’i*), and the settled *Fulbe* (*Fulbe Siire*). These categories are not sharply distinguished from each other and some *Fulbe* families may move from one category to another.
Nomadic Fulbe--Mbororo’en

The original group of Fulbe was the Mbororo’en, that is, the fully nomadic Fulbe (Hopen 1958:1-2).17 Theodore Monod defines nomads, as “those who have no ‘home’, no determinate center to which they are attached and in which they have rights and obligations” (quoted in R. Nelson 1981a:4). All of the conditions of this definition apply to the Mbororo’en. They follow habitual transhumance patterns, moving seasonally between their dry season area and their wet season area, and their life-style generally keeps them away from the rest of the society, but as Stenning points out this detachment should not be exaggerated because,

the pastoral life is pursued not in isolation, but in some degree of symbiosis with sedentary agricultural communities. Alongside the continuous exchange of dairy products for grain and other goods, there have existed, possibly for many centuries, arrangements for pasturing cattle on land returning to fallow, and for guaranteeing cattle tracks and the use of water supplies (1959:6).

Semi-nomadic Fulbe

Those Fulbe whose herds declined to the extent that they had to supplement their resources by doing some farming became semi-sedentary. The semi-nomadic Fulbe, called Fulbe Na’i (cattle Fulbe) or Fulbe Ladde (bush Fulbe), do not rely entirely on their cattle for subsistence, rather they supplement their cattle with agriculture. They hardly ever raise cash crops (as peasants do), rather they use their crops for domestic consumption. Their farms are normally smaller than those of the sedentary people, and their herds of cattle are normally smaller than those of the nomadic Fulbe. For the semi-

17 Some scholars like F. W. Taylor (1932:19) claim that the term Mbororo refers to “the best known clan of the nomadic Fulani,” but most Fulbe and most scholars agree that the term refers not to a clan but to either a group of fully nomadic Fulbe or all fully nomadic Fulbe. The term Mbororo’en for nomadic Fulbe is mainly used in Cameroon and Northern Nigeria.
nomadic *Fulbe*, the focus is cattle; only out of necessity do they take up farming, sometimes carried out by hired *Haabe* laborers.

Often semi-nomadic *Fulbe* have to work with split households and split herds. The farm is located near the dry season grazing area, which tends to become the “home” area for them. The household head stays in this area with a small herd of milk cows, while the sons herd the cattle far away during the rainy season. The sons return home with the herds during the dry season to assist with harvesting and preparations for cultivation (Stenning 1959:6-8; Hopen 1958:29-30).

Semi-nomadism/semi-sedentarism may have causes other than poverty in cattle. On some plateaus like Jos and Mambila, many *Fulbe* herds have found favorable pastoral conditions that have made extensive seasonal movements unnecessary. Permanent households with farms have been established and most of the cattle are kept permanently on the plateau, while the rest are taken to the lowland during the dry season (Hopen 1958:31-32; Stenning 1959:7-9; Frantz 1986).

**Sedentary *Fulbe*–*Fulbe Siire***

Some *Fulbe* left the mobile pastoral life due to loss of herds and became settled peasants, while others became traders or took up other urban occupations. These *Fulbe* have merged into the ethnic groups among which they live, and in some cases they have even adopted the local language and intermarried with the local people. They are called *Fulbe Siire*.18

Some sedentary *Fulbe* are still pastoralists, but on average the number of animals per household is lower than that of the semi-nomadic *Fulbe*. The sedentary *Fulbe* depend more on farming than do the semi-nomadic pastoralists. Often even *Fulbe* government

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18 *Siire* is a synonym for *saare*, meaning compound or home. What is implied is that these *Fulbe* have permanent homes.
employees and businessmen have herds of cattle taken care of by hired shepherds. They use cattle for investment purposes and to acquire prestige. Among the sedentary Fulbe are many livestock traders

Some scholars include the aristocratic Fulbe, called Torodbe, with the Fulbe Siire, as a social class of town Fulbe, whereas others consider them to be a distinct subgroup of Fulbe. The Torodbe are, like the Fulbe Siire, completely settled and have been for many years. From among this group come the political rulers and the leading Muslim scholars (modibbe) in Northern Nigeria. (Abubakar 1977:28; Stenning 1959:9; Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966:110; Raay 1975:76-78).

Social Classes in Fulbe Societies

The military conquests by the Fulbe in connection with the jihad of Dan Fodio led to the enslavement of thousands of the autochthonous people (maccube). When the British took over Northern Nigeria all these enslaved people were liberated. The extent of slavery and the duration of it in Northern Nigeria, however, was much more limited than it was in other parts of West Africa. The long-term effect of this slave-master relationship in Northern Nigeria has, therefore, been much less severe than, for instance, it has been in the Masina area of Mali where the descendants of the enslaved Fulbeized population, the riimaaybe, form a distinct group of Fulbe much different from the free-born class of Fulbe called the rimbe. Fulbe blacksmiths and other artisans form a third class in some Fulbe societies (Riesman 1977:82; Dupire 1970:427-449). Sonja Fagerberg, who in the late 1970s did a survey of Fulfulde, however, states that,

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19 Riesman (1977:266-267) notes that there are two words that designate slaves. Maccudo (plural, maccube) refers a slave captured in war or bought (the female counterpart being kordo), whereas diimaajo (plural, riimaaybe) is a person born of an enslaved woman. In Northern Nigeria today, however, only the term maccube seems to be known.
The three-way division (free born/castes/slaves) is pretty much lost further east in Nigeria and Cameroun where castes and caste members do not really exist . . . In Nigeria, social relations between the Fulbe themselves have been largely obscured by the more important distinctions of Fulbe/Hausa, nomadic cattle herders/agriculturists, and Muslim/non-Muslim (quoted in Duddles 1992:5).

The Family

The basic economic and social unit of the pastoral Fulbe societies is the family. From a Christian perspective, the family is also the basic unity in society. Since the goal of the communication of the gospel should include the establishment of Christian Fulbe families, it is necessary for the communicator to understand how a family functions in the pastoral Fulbe society. After a brief look at how a family is established through marriage, the role of a household and the inheritance system will be considered.

Marriage

The nomadic and semi-nomadic Fulbe are endogamous. Normally, a man takes a wife from within his own lineage group or a lineage group related agnatically to his own. The preferential marriage is between patrilateral parallel cousins, that is, between children of paternal uncles. If the fathers of the marriage partners are not brothers or half-brothers, it is preferred that the marriage partners at least may be able to trace their descent through male links to a common great-grandfather or great-great-grandfather. A man may also, however, marry a woman from another lineage group within that cluster of lineage groups, which is called a clan. This means that the marriage partners may not be able to trace their descent, neither through male or female links, to a common known ancestor, but they know that they descend from the same (legendary) ancestor of the whole clan.
Only when a man has been married and has had his first child does he gain full control of his inheritance of cattle and establish his own homestead. Now the new family is, in principle, economically independent, and it may choose to reside far away from the father’s camp. But often a son will keep his homestead near his father’s homestead until his first son is at least seven years of age. His cattle will be herded together with his father’s cattle by his junior brothers and himself (Hopen 1958:98-103; Stenning 1959:150-151).

The Household

Attached to a family may be a number of other individuals, and together they form the household, the dwelling place of which is called the homestead. A herd is defined as the cattle that belong to one head of the family and whose calves are tied to one calf rope (daangol). A number of households living together form a camp (wuro).

The family lives on the diary produce, the grain and other products, which they either grow themselves or obtain from the sedentary population in exchange for their surplus diary products. Meat does not form part of their staple diet, and animals are not often sold. The killing of animals is normally restricted to the killing of sick beasts, the killing of a beast for ceremonial occasions, or the killing of a beast to fulfill an urgent need for cash (Stenning 1959:101-102). Since cattle are inherited along the male line, women normally do not own cattle. The Fulbe stick to the idea that “men should own the cattle and women should own the milk” (Hopen 1958:23). This reflects the strict division of labor in a Fulbe family. Stenning describes a Wodaabe family as a “herd-owning and milk-selling enterprise,” where “Men have to do with cattle, their seasonal movements, daily pasturing and watering, and veterinary care. Adult men are herd-owners and

20 In the next chapter, the religious aspects of marriage will be treated in more detail.
managers, male children and adolescents are herdsmen. Adult women are dairy women and purveyors of milk, female children and adolescents are dairymaids” (1959:103).

**Inheritance**

Most nomadic *Fulbe*, like the *Wodaabe*, tend to follow the traditional inheritance system. The purpose of the traditional inheritance system is to keep the cattle within the lineage group. If the deceased leave sons, the sons inherit everything. If there are no sons, the estate passes on to the deceased’s full and half-brothers (or in their absence to their sons, or to the father’s brothers or patrilateral parallel cousins). When there are sons, the sons normally get an equal share of the estate, but some advantages are given to the oldest son. Furthermore, only those sons who have established their own homestead can inherit directly. In the case of sons not having established homestead, the senior brother (or if he is also unmarried, a paternal uncle) is the guardian of the share of the unmarried sons. The daughters are not entitled to any share in the estate.

The sedentary *Fulbe* and some semi-nomadic *Fulbe* tend to follow the Muslim Maliki law. According to the Maliki law, one tenth of an inheritance has to be paid as death duties to the Muslim authorities; a daughter receives one half of a son’s share; and the oldest son does not get more than the other sons. Most *Fulbe* object to paying the death duties and to giving a daughter as much as half a share of a son.

There is no doubt that it is becoming more common for *Fulbe* to adapt to the Muslim way of sharing the inheritance. They are to some degree forced to adapt by dissatisfied parties threatening to take those who insist on following the tradition to court. The question of what principle of inheritance should be followed, however, is in practice not all-important in cattle-owning families. A head of a homestead usually gives more and more of the rights over the cattle to his sons as they take more and more responsibility for the herd. A son, however, does not own any of his father’s cattle until
he has been married, and has had a child, and has set up his own homestead with wife and child. After the last son marries, the father usually has handed all his cattle over to his sons, and for the rest of his life he depends on his sons to take care of him. If a man lives long enough, there are no cattle to distribute at his death (Stenning 1959:46-50; Hopen 1958:137-140; Reed 1932:43-44).

The crucial role of the cattle for the institution of the family has been aptly summarized by Stenning: “The simultaneous formation of a homestead, a household, and a herd demonstrates the interdependence of family and herd. The development of the family, and the divorces which may occur in it, are closely bound up with the reproductive capacity, not only of the family but of its herd” (1959:147).

**Education**

Most pastoral *Fulbe* belong to kinship societies, but they are surrounded by and interact with both peasant and modern societies. Therefore, the socialization of *Fulbe* children is influenced by the surrounding peasant and modern societies. Most *Fulbe* are fully socialized into their *Fulbe* kinship society, but along with this socialization are elements of peasant and modern societies.

In Northern Nigeria, there is a long tradition of involvement of missions and churches in education through Bible schools and primary and secondary schools. The target group for these educational institutions and programs has typically been sedentary agricultural ethnic groups from animistic backgrounds. The question concerning education to be addressed through the analysis of the *Fulbe* background is how can an educational program provided by the churches be adapted to the needs of pastoral *Fulbe*?
Types of Education

In a *Fulbe* kinship society the content to be transmitted in education is *Pulaaku*, which makes the individual into a *Pullo*. The medium used to transmit the content is *Fulfulde*. The main agents are the mother and father and the elder siblings, and the training takes place in the context of the family in the bush. The vast majority of the pastoral *Fulbe* are non-literate, and the traditional education does not require any literacy. This training, which all *Fulbe* boys and girls receive, enables them to survive in the rather inhospitable bush and gives them their ethnic identity.

In the Muslim peasant society, with which the *Fulbe* pastoralists often interact, the content to be transmitted is Islam, which makes the individual into a Muslim. The medium used is most often Hausa (along with Arabic). The main agent is the *malam* (the Qur’anic teacher) and the training takes place in the context of the mosque in the village. This training, which many *Fulbe* boys and some *Fulbe* girls receive, enables them to socialize with Muslim peasants in the village and gives them their Islamic religious identity.

In the modern society, which increasingly influences all ethnic groups in Nigeria today, the content to be transmitted is Western education, which makes the individual into a modern citizen. The medium used is Hausa and later, in the upper levels, English, and the education requires that the student become literate. The main agent is the school teacher, and the training takes place in the school in the town or village. Some *Fulbe* boys and a few *Fulbe* girls receive at least a partial modern Western education, which helps them to survive when later in life they have to interact with the institutions of the modern Nigerian society. It also gives them their national identity as Nigerian citizens.
The Five Life Stages

Most pastoral Fulbe in Northern Nigeria recognize the five life stages of childhood. These stages are youth, young adulthood, senior adulthood, and senility, each with its own developmental tasks (Stenning 1959:154-159).

1. Childhood (*famarbe*—children). Only after naming is a child referred to as a person. A child is taught to speak by its mother, and it is the mother who first teaches the child the ways of *Pulaaku*. Later the father inculcates the virtues of *Pulaaku*. Within the lineage group, the children learn from the *ardo* who exemplifies *Pulaaku*. Towards the end of this period the boys start helping their brothers in herding animals around the camp, and the girls assist their sisters and their mother in household chores (Stenning 1959:149-150).

2. Youth (*sukaabe*—unmarried adolescents). When a boy at the age of nine or ten is circumcised, his father earmarks cattle for him and the boy starts herding cattle away from the camp. He is given a herdsman’s staff and a calabash bottle for water, and *Qur’anic* charms are hung around his neck. From now on he will sleep with his older brothers near the cattle corral. When he reaches puberty, he is called a *paanyo* (someone who has grown strong), and he enters the *geerewol* dance, which is described below (Stenning 1959:150-151).

Some Fulbe clans practice the ceremonial beating called *soro* as a manhood test. In *soro*, young men from different lineage groups or clans take turns in striking a limited number of times each other on the naked breast or back with a stick. The young men participating are expected to endure the pain without showing any sign of displeasure.

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21 The age-grouping may vary a little from clan to clan and from area to area. Dupire states that the Wodaabe of Niger only have one category between the *bibbe* and the *ndotti’en*, namely *sukaabe*, whereas the Jafu’en of Adamawa have two categories, namely *kae’en* (adolescents) and *kori’en* (young married men) (Dupire 1970:453, 457).

22 The *ardo* is a lineage group leader.
The young girls watch this ceremony to see how their heroes behave. If a young man shows signs of pain, he is ridiculed by the girls and finds it difficult to find a girl to marry (Dupire 1970:460; Bocquené 1988:44-51, 105-116).

A girl in this period before puberty is called a biddo debbo (a girl child), and she assists her mother in household management. At puberty, a girl changes her hairstyle and is then called surbaajo (a woman with firm breasts). There is no initiation rite for the girls comparable to the soro for boys, but the attainment of puberty is marked by a ceremony called tuppal, in which the girl’s ears are pierced. Then she may participate in the geerewol dance. The young men (sukaabe) dress up in beautiful costumes and dance with their faces painted in vivid colors. At a certain time during the dance, two of the young girls are told to choose partners with whom they will spend the night. Both the soro and the geerewol dance are on the decline in Nigeria in recent years (Dupire 1970:461; Stenning 1959:151-158; Bocquené 1988:39, 51-58).

3. Young Adulthood (kori’en--young married adults). This stage begins with the establishment of a homestead and a herd. The young man no longer participates in the geerewol dance. He also changes his dress and hairstyle and may start growing a beard. When a woman marries and gives birth to her first child, she is considered a real woman, kaabo debbo, and she stops participating in the dances with the sukaabe (Stenning 1959:158-159).

4. Senior Adulthood (ndotti’en--elders). Around the age of forty, the man is considered an elder and can participate in the deliberations of the community since he has his own herd, a wife, and children. The wife is called inniraajo (mother) when she has given birth to several children.

5. Senility (naye’en--old People). When a woman ceases to bear children, and when a man can no longer get about, they are taken care of by their sons (Stenning 1959:159).
Government (Decision Making)

The institution of government includes authority and leadership on different levels: within the family, within the Fulbe community, and within the wider Nigerian society. Even though there is, in principle, freedom of religion (including freedom to change religion) for all citizens in Nigeria today, Muslim Fulbe are, in practice, not very free to change their religion. Conversion is not a private individual affair. Rather conversion brings a convert into conflicts with the authorities of his/her society. In order to plan a responsible and effective strategy for helping Muslim Fulbe change their religion, it is necessary to understand the authority systems within the pastoral Fulbe society.

On different levels we find different authority figures, and the laws legitimizing the authority and the sanctions differ significantly. Within the family and the Fulbe community, the “law,” based on which authority is exercised, is the code of Pulaaku. When Fulbe are relating to the wider Nigerian society, they first encounter Islamic law, which since the jihad of Dan Fodio has been increasingly influencing all of the social institutions of the Fulbe societies. Finally, the pastoral Fulbe are increasingly finding themselves in contact with federal, state and local government institutions and their laws and decrees. For many years, the nomadic Fulbe have tried as much as possible to avoid contact with these government authorities, and in particular with the courts, but the development of the Nigerian society has been such that they have had to relate more and more to these authorities.

Authority Relations within the Family

Paul Riesman, in his analysis of the Jelgobe Fulbe society in Burkina Faso, distinguishes between three authority relationships within the family: authority based on
age differences, authority of men over women, and authority based on the ties of kinship.23

In general a child is expected to obey his/her father and mother, a younger sibling his/her older sibling, and a wife her husband. The father, however, normally treats his son (in particular when he is growing up) with a certain respect that allows a considerable amount of freedom. The reason for this respect is that the father wants his son to grow up, not as a slave with a slave mentality of blind obedience, but as a free man. A father hesitates to give his son orders in public because it might damage his reputation if his son does not carry out his orders. The same applies to a husband’s relationship to his wife. He will gives her in public only those orders which he is sure that she will obey. The division of labor between men and women in the camp is such that it is difficult for the husband to exercise much influence over the activities of his wife. The nature of the marriage systems among the Fulbe and their high rate of divorce also limits the authority of the husband over his wife.24

Authority relations in Fulbe societies are often reflected physically in distances. The men’s area of the camp is clearly separated by the cattle rope from the women’s area, and only at night will the husband enter his wife’s hut. A son and his father tend mutually to avoid each other during the day. An adult son who no longer respects his father’s authority stops living together with his father and begins to keep his herd separate and cultivate his farm separately (Riesman 1977:74-82, 195-209).

23 When asking about the authority relations, Riesman was told: ‘‘Wanaa baaba na waawi biyum? (Isn’t a father ‘capable of’ his child?)’’. In the same way, one hears ‘Gorko na waawi debbo? (The man ‘is capable of’ the woman),’ and ‘Mawniyo na waawi minyiyo? (The older brother ‘is capable of’ the younger)’’ (1977:75).

24 The freedom of Fulbe women seems to decrease when Fulbe settle and are more Islamized (VerEcke 1989).
Authority Relations in the Fulbe Community

The first and most important level of leadership in the Fulbe community is that of the jawmu saare, the head of the family household. Since each family is a viable economic unit, and since pastoral Fulbe cherish freedom, the leadership structure above the level of the individual extended family is very fluid.

The second level of leadership is the leader of a camp, called mawdo (the big one). A camp, wuro, consists of a number of households that have chosen to reside together for a certain period and who recognize a common leader, often called the mawdo. The reasons for joining a camp may be the need for companionship, security, cooperation in herding, and sharing of information. Most often all of the households in a camp belong to the same clan, but relatives on the side of the mother and even friends are sometimes accepted into the camp. The household heads choose their leader from among themselves. “This is done on the basis of such various criteria as the relative age of the household heads, their experience in the area, the size of their family households, the size of the herd, and also according to ‘popularity’” (Hopen 1958:161). Camp leadership, however, is very weak because of the autonomy claimed by each individual household and the fluidity of the camp structure (Hopen 1958:157-162).

The third level of leadership is that of the ardo (leader). The ardo is the leader of a lineage group and, as such, the spokesman of the group in their dealings with the sedentary populations. In times of war, he is in charge of defense. Just like the mawdo, however, he does not have much authority. As Stenning puts it, “His duty is merely to hear all that is said, to summarize the various points of view, to lend the weight of his experience to the one which appeals to him, taking into account the least fortunate of his group. He may not command kinsmen, only advise them . . .” (1959:51). At any time, his followers are free to separate themselves from his group and set up a rival group or join another group.
The fourth level of leadership is linked to the whole clan. Among the fully nomadic Fulbe (Mbororo’en) such as the Wodaabe, clusters of lineage groups (each under its ardo) from the same clan sometimes gather in one area in the rainy season. The lineage groups are arranged hierarchically according to their clan purity. The lineage group descending from the senior son of the founding ancestor is considered to have the highest status and is called the core group lenyol gidima. Among the Wodaabe there has been a position of mawdo laawol Pulaaku (guardian of the Fulbe way). He was not elected as the ardo’en are, rather he entered office by succession as a descendent in the purest line of the clan, the lenyol gidima. The office passed from father to eldest son. This mawdo laawol Pulaaku supervised a number of the Wodaabe ceremonies, and in consultation with the ardo’en he had the authority to banish from the clan society anybody who broke the Pulaaku code (and reinstall the offender to the society when the offender confessed his sin) (Stenning 1959:51-59).

**Pastoral Fulbe under Pressure from the Modern Nigerian Society**

The pastoral Fulbe society, whose social organization is analyzed above, is undergoing much social changes. All of the institutions of the pastoral Fulbe society are becoming increasingly affected by the modernization of the entire Nigerian society.

The pastoral Fulbe have to a large extent been living on the margins of the Nigerian society. The nomadic Fulbe have in particular tried to minimize their contact with the authorities. For centuries the pastoral Fulbe have had to pay cattle tax to various governments, while not benefiting much from government initiative, which have mainly been geared toward the needs of the sedentary population.

The colonial conquest of Northern Nigeria in the beginning of this century and the establishment of a united Nigeria have brought Northern Nigeria into closer contact with
the rest of the world. Economic, social, political, and religious ideas mainly from the West have deeply penetrated the Northern Nigerian societal life. All of this has led to a modernizing of Northern Nigeria, which increasingly affects the pastoral *Fulbe* society.

The pastoral *Fulbe* have come under a strong pressure from the modern Nigerian society in a number of areas. The two most important pressures have been the pressure to settle and to let their children go to school. It is in the midst of these social pressures that the pastoral *Fulbe* encounter the gospel. The impetus for the study of the effects of modernization on the pastoral *Fulbe* society is, therefore, the need to discover their problems and the felt needs to which the missionary communicators need to respond.

**The Land-Squeeze Syndrome**

The population of Nigeria has doubled during the last three decades. Still the majority of Nigerians depend on agriculture for their livelihood, and therefore more and more land is being cultivated. Some land has become impoverished and therefore produces poor results, which have also lead to an increase in the area of cultivation.

The need to bring more land under cultivation has brought about a change of attitude of the land cultivators towards the nomads with whom they have shared a symbiotic existence for many years. The land owners are not willing to allow the nomads to graze on their land and manure such land now that the farmers can obtain fertilizers (Ezeomah 1987:23-24).

In Benue state and in parts of what is today Taraba state, the pastoral *Fulbe* have been effectively excluded from grazing their cattle because of violent conflicts with the local farmers, in particular the *Tiv* farmers (Gorder 1990). Land traditionally used by pastoral *Fulbe* is increasingly being used for large-scale agricultural and industrial purposes, and this encroachment on traditional *Fulbe* pasture land increases the pressure on the remaining grazing areas, both in grazing reserves and in other rangelands. This situation has led to overuse of grazing areas and ecological degradation. The resulting
conflicts between pastoralists and agriculturists is evidence of what Jerome Gefu calls a land-squeeze syndrome (1992:59).

**Commercialization of Livestock Production**

The predominant method of animal exploitation among the pastoral *Fulbe* is subsistence pastoralism, but even so few subsistence pastoralists depend on livestock alone for subsistence. Most have to get grain and other necessities either from their own farms or from the market by selling milk or animals.

What is commercialized is the surplus animal produce—milk. The marketing of surplus milk is to obtain the means to purchase other foodstuffs, utensils and ornaments. The slaughter of animals for sale has never been considered a major aspect of pastoral enterprise. Animals are sold to farmers or to butchers for slaughter when the animals are ill, barren or too old to be of any use in milk production. Such sales are usually made to meet pressing financial needs such as for tax payment or to purchase grain for the family (Ezeomah 1987:124).

There is among pastoral *Fulbe* today a wish to increase milk production and marketing. This, however, presupposes a better system of collection, processing and distribution.

Over the last decades, the demand for meat has greatly increased because of the doubling of the population. During the oil boom in the 1960s and 1970s, the demand increased because of the prosperous economy, which encouraged commercialization of livestock production. The government is pushing for a commercialization of pastoral production, but as Ezeomah points out, “it is clear that the practice of holding animals as prestige symbols and as security against risks resulting from diseases and drought, the constraint of land tenure and ineffective government intervention to improve nomadic *Fulbe* pastoralism, have made it difficult for the nomads to commercialize extensively” (1987:135).

Those who have taken advantage of commercialization of livestock production in Nigeria, however, have been town *Fulbe* and non-*Fulbe* businessmen who have
established ranches. This has had very adverse effects for the nomadic Fulbe, who have been displaced from areas where they traditionally grazed their animals. This displacement along with the commercialization of livestock production by the urban elite has put the pastoral Fulbe are under pressure to commercialize their livestock production (Ezeomah 1987:126; Jakobsen 1989:47).

**Human and Animal Health Problems**

The pastoral Fulbe are more exposed to attacks of a variety of diseases because of their mobile life-style, and at the same time they have less access to modern health facilities than the sedentary population. “As a mobile population, they live in make-shift huts and in unhealthy surroundings and adverse climatic conditions. Because of their constant migration and dispersion, they are difficult to reach with health services which, therefore, tend to neglect them” (Ezeomah 1987:62-63). Apart from their mobile life-style, their lack of modern education also exposes them to health hazards.

For centuries the nomads have tried to avoid drought and disease infections by means of their nomadic movements (migration, migratory drift, and transhumance), but they have not always been successful. When unsuccessful they have had to shift towards mixed farming and a more sedentary life-style. Even so they have not integrated into the modern society but have remained largely marginalized.

For decades the government veterinary services have offered substantial preventive and curative services to the Fulbe pastoralists. In the 1960s, the Rinderpest disease was eradicated through immunization, but in 1983, a new severe outbreak occurred (probably brought into Nigeria from the neighboring countries). Because of the tense relationship between the pastoralists, the sedentary population, and the authorities, and because of pastoralists’ lack of modern education, it has sometimes been difficult for
the veterinary people to gain the confidence of the *Fulbe* to convince them of the need to vaccinate or treat their animals with modern medicine (Ezeomah 1987:30-31, 63-68).

**Sedentarization**

All the above pressures push the nomadic and semi-nomadic *Fulbe* more and more toward sedentarization and participation in the modern Nigerian world through education. When they come into closer contact with the sedentary population and with the modern institutions of Nigerian society, they are also pushed toward a higher degree of Islamization. When pastoral *Fulbe* settle down they become integrated into the Muslim community and encounter the Muslim institutions.

In the history of the *Fulbe* in Northern Nigeria, there has over the last two centuries been a noticeable trend towards sedentarization, so that today the majority of all *Fulbe* are sedentary or semi-sedentary. When there were abundant grazing opportunities, *Fulbe* pastoralists made no attempt to acquire land, but within the last decades crop cultivation has dramatically increased because of the rapid growth in the human population. This land scarcity has motivated some *Fulbe* pastoralists to seek to acquire land to set up a permanent base to which they can always return.25 This trend toward a higher degree of sedentism has been accompanied with a higher incidence of mixed economy, where pastoralism is combined with farming (Frantz 1981b:83; Calderbank 1991:30).

In Nigeria, the pastoral *Fulbe* control over 85 percent of Nigeria’s livestock population. The livestock production of these pastoral *Fulbe* makes up 58.5 percent of the nation’s meat consumption and contributes about 40 percent to the national income.

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25 In 1970, some *Fulbe* groups established “The Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association” to protect their interests, in particular the association dealt with land rights and conflicts with farmers, but it has not gained general acceptance as representative of all pastoral *Fulbe*. Some *Fulbe* claim that it only represents the interest of the settled pastoralists (Calderbank 1991:33; Gefu 1992:76).
from agricultural production. For a long time there has been a wide gap between the meat production in Nigeria and the demand, which has led to an expensive importation of meat into Nigeria. Even so, there is not enough meat to supply the population with the needed protein intake of the average Nigerian. This situation has led to the government’s intervening in the livestock sector in order to boost meat production through introduction of modern methods of livestock production (Gefu 1992:11-14).

State intervention in pastoral production has a long history in Nigeria. In the colonial period as well as after independence, the headline has been “modernization” and a key concept in all plans has been sedentarization. As Geoffrey Calderbank points out, “administrators and others came to regard pastoral development as synonymous with settlement and, presumably to rationalize this view, have often claimed that this will somehow, in itself, lead to increased production” (1991:30).

Over the last fifty years, a number of projects supported by national and foreign agencies have been set up, but none of them have been successful. It is now evident that these sedentarization programs have neither increased the livestock production, nor improved the living standards of the pastoralists, but rather have had serious ecological consequences (Gefu 1992:83-88; Calderbank 1991:30-31).

Irrespective of the failure of the government intervention in favor of sedentarization, a spontaneous sedentarization has taken place in many parts of Northern Nigeria (Frantz 1975:347). Traditionally, nomads have given up nomadism because of decimation of their herds due to drought, disease, cattle theft, or other misfortunes, but today some young men are selling their cattle and abandoning pastoralism altogether, as Frantz points out,

because of its rigorous demands or out of exhaustion from trying to prevent crop damage or paying heavy fines. The material and social attractions of town life--motor-cycles, radios, leather shoes, commercial beer, travel and recreational activities--sometimes exert compelling influences upon both young men and women (1975:347).
The increased sedentarization of the pastoral Fulbe has had a number of significant social, cultural and religious consequences. The process of social change that has occurred among the Mbororo’en in Mambila in connection with their increasing sedentism, in particular since World War I, indicates what will may happen to many other pastoral Fulbe in other parts of Northern Nigeria.

1. The link between Fulbe and their cattle has been loosened. Fulbe have combined livestock rearing with farming, and some Fulbe have even left cattle rearing altogether and taken up urban professions. At the same time many non-Fulbe have started rearing their own cattle or working as hired shepherds with the Fulbe herds of cattle.

2. The Fulbe have established much stronger links with the modern Nigerian society, through sedentarization, commercialization of cattle rearing, and increased attendance in primary schools.

3. The Fulbe have given up many of their cultural ceremonies, such as the soro and the geerewol, and the traditional marriage customs have been seriously challenged. Exogamous marriages or even inter-ethnic marriages have increased.

4. Through sedentarization, the Fulbe have had much more interaction with Muslim town Fulbe and Hausa, and this has led to a stricter adherence to Muslim beliefs and practices among the Fulbe. Through Islam, the Mbororo’en have become increasingly integrated into an international system, the world-wide Muslim umma.

5. The status of Fulfulde as the lingua franca has been challenged by Hausa and English (Frantz 1981a).

The attitudes of the nomadic and semi-nomadic Fulbe towards sedentarization differ greatly. Some Fulbe claim that they would never consider giving up their mobile life-style because they consider it part of their identity. Others claim that it has never
been in the interest of pastoralists to be nomadic, but that they are nomadic only because their pastoral way of life compels them to be so (Alkali 1988:16).

JCMWA’s first secretary, John Gorder, in a report based on a small number of interviews of *Fulbe* in Southern Gongola state, concluded that “Nomadic Fulani desire to settle, but realize that inadequate pasture, cattle disease, and increased farming . . . FORCE MOVEMENT. (Conflicts with TIV farmers, the 1984 Rinderpest epidemic, and expanded farming everywhere confirm Fulani suspicions about settling)” (1990:61).

**Education**

A key element of modernization, and the element most often taken as a symbol of modernization in Nigeria today, is the so-called Western education. As described above the pastoral *Fulbe* have their own traditional education system, and they also make use of the Islamic education system. Literacy in Hausa and/or English has come to be valued very highly in Northern Nigeria. Being a modern citizen today involves being educated, that is, educated according to the Western education system, whereas being non-literate is equated with being backward. Furthermore, Western education is seen as an indispensable prerequisite for socio-economic development of the nation and is also seen as necessary if individuals and groups are to participate meaningfully in the modern society. A continually increasing percentage of the Nigerian population is being educated, and the pastoral *Fulbe* are under pressure from without and from within to participate in this educational development.

A discussion has been going on for decades now as to whether the nomadic and semi-nomadic *Fulbe* have to be settled before they can be properly educated according to
modern standards, or whether they have to be educated before they can achieve settlement. Proponents of both positions seem to agree that both education and settlement of Fulbe are good and necessary for the Fulbe as well as for the rest of the Nigerian society.

The federal government of Nigeria, in principle, opted for beginning to educate nomads before they were settled hoping that nomadic education would speed up the process of sedentarization. In the 1960s and 1970s, private and public experiments with nomadic education were carried out. The experiments indicated that at least some of the nomadic and semi-nomadic Fulbe were interested in modern education. In 1980, Plateau state pioneered a program of nomadic education, the objectives of which were to take the context of the Fulbe pastoralists seriously and to relate the education meaningfully to their needs and aspirations. Although the program ran into many problems and the noble intentions of adapting the education system to the Fulbe context were only partially realized, the federal government in 1988 decided to introduce a similar program in all states in Northern Nigeria. Though no survey of the nomadic education programs in the

26 According to Hamidu Alkali, who is himself a Pullo, education is not the number one priority among the basic needs of the nomads. The most important need is land ownership, so that the nomads may set up a permanent home and have grazing opportunities. Therefore, Alkali concludes that “any program of education for the nomads which leaves out the question of settling them and providing grazing lands for them is an exercise in futility. . . . Settle the nomad first and then give him the same type of education as available to the rest of Nigerians. By settling him he will feel that he is also a Nigerian” (1988:8-9).

27 The then Federal Minister of Education, Jibril Aminu, who is a Pullo, claimed that “to suggest that they must be settled first before they are given education is to condemn the nomads to eternal darkness. Do not forget that if the nomads become literate they can effectively fight for their right to grazing and settlement areas. They would challenge the land grabbing large-scale farmers who are steadily driving them away from the country.” He did not advocate that the nomads should not be settled, but that “while other sectors are making provision for their settlement, there must be a viable sustained educational program for them” (1988:4).

28 In the four experimental schools 250 pupils were enrolled in 1983, and their attendance was relatively high (between seventy-five and ninety percent). Hausa was used instead of Fulfulde, and many of the adjustments of the syllabus intended to make the education more relevant to Fulbe children were neglected. Instead of mobile schools in tents moving along with the nomads, all schools remained permanently each in their area and tents were replaced with zinc sheet or mud buildings (Lar 1989:76-85).
northern states are available, interviews with *Fulbe* from various parts of Northern Nigeria and my own observations indicate that the program has not so far been successful, neither quantitatively nor qualitatively.

In 1983, Ezeomah, in a survey of the attitudes of pastoral *Fulbe* towards formal (Western) education, found that most of the parents interviewed had recognized some of the advantages of modern education, such as learning to read and write, knowing more about the world, learning more about animal diseases and how to cure them, and being equipped to communicate with the government. The main constraints preventing nomadic children from attending modern schools were the herding responsibilities of children, the lack of land for settlement, and the distances of schools from their settlements (1983a:27).

Both the research of Mary N. Lar (1989, 1997) and Ezeomah (1983, 1987, 1988) showed that the reluctance towards Western education might also stem from fear about the eventual outcome of educating their children. Ezeomah reported that some pastoral *Fulbe* are resistant towards education because “In their interaction with people who have acquired Western type education, they have not seen anyone who has a good herd of cattle. Rather, they are people known to them to be good shopkeepers, office workers and veterinary officers and not even good land cultivators like their parents” (1983:19). Gorder came across a similar fear among pastoral *Fulbe* in Southern Gongola state: “Nomadic Fulanis desire education for some of their children, but DISTRUST town Fulani and others who will educate their children AWAY from PULAAKU and cattle rearing” (1990:61).

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29 A study of the nomadic education project in Plateau state also showed that the pastoral *Fulbe* saw education as positive. A survey carried out in eighteen local government areas in Plateau state indicated that all the children available the parents were willing to send more than half of them to school. The fact that a number of pastoral *Fulbe* are already sending some of their children to the existing primary schools also indicates that pastoral *Fulbe* are beginning to appreciate modern education to the extent that they will release some of their children from some of their herding and other duties (Lar 1989:161-163).
Although pastoral *Fulbe* have been pressured and enticed towards modern education and literacy, there are also forces that reduce the attraction of literacy and modern education. The failure of the mass National Literacy Campaign in Nigeria in the 1980s, the goal of which was to make everyone literate before the year 2000, was among other things due to the fact that the rural population did not understand its value. Stephen D. J. Niyang, who participated in the campaign quotes Paul Wangoola to explain the *Fulbe’s* lack of motivation: “As a result, the need for widespread literacy as rooted in the economy does not exist. You do not need widespread literacy to participate in a ‘subsistence economy’, i.e., an economy where people survive not because of the economy but in spite of it” (1997:232).

On top of this, the economic crisis in Nigeria within the last ten to fifteen years has rapidly increased the non-literacy level. Schools have not been functioning well and the opportunities for graduates to get well-paid jobs with the government were drastically decreased.  

**Summary**

The history of the *Fulbe*, the social organization, and the present changes due to modernization of the pastoral *Fulbe* society exert a decisive influence on the encounter of the pastoral *Fulbe* with the gospel and the church. This study of the history of the *Fulbe* indicates that the pastoral *Fulbe* see themselves as a group of people set apart from their neighbors, related more closely to Arabs and white people than to Negroid ethnic groups. Seen from the perspective of the other groups in Northern Nigeria, the *Fulbe* pastoralists are intruders who have no right to the land. The conflicts between herders and farmers may make it difficult for the local congregations, most of whose members are farmers, to

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30 In 1989, the literacy rate in Nigeria was estimated to be forty-two percent (Grimes 1992:316)
communicate the gospel effectively to the pastoral Fulbe. In this situation, white missionaries may be very useful partners in the mission projects since they have not been part of the conflict and since the Fulbe feel an affinity for them.

The study of the history further shows that the interaction of the Fulbe with Islam has been so long that Islam is now part of the identity of the pastoral Fulbe. This is so, even though the form of Islam practiced by pastoral Fulbe is often mixed with many non-Islamic elements. The change of religion for a pastoral Fulbe, therefore, affects their identity. The question then becomes, “Is it at all possible to be a Pullo without being a Muslim?” This means that the mission projects throughout all the phases of conversion must communicate the gospel in messages and through media that are geared to strengthen the Fulbe identity of the converts. Similarly the converts need help relating their new faith to Islam and relating as Christians to the Muslim Fulbe community.

Although there have always been tensions between the more Islamized town Fulbe and their pastoral brethren, there still exists a strong bond of loyalty between them. Ever since the jihad of Dan Fodio in the beginning of the 19th century, a town Fulbe elite together with a Hausa elite, has played a dominant role in the political and economic life of Northern Nigeria. Many Christians feel that this powerful Islamic elite still tries to oppress Christians. Over the last two decades, the relationship between Christians and Muslims has deteriorated with recurring outbursts of violence. All this has made mission to pastoral Fulbe more difficult, and it has created more problems for Fulbe who convert to Christianity. Christians may be tempted to consider Fulbe to be their enemies, just as Fulbe may regard conversion from Islam to Christianity as treason against the

31 There are, however, also indications that some of the pastoral Fulbe have been dissatisfied with mainstream Islam and have joined alternative Muslim movements such as the Mahdiyya movement and more recently the Izala and Shi’a movements. Probably, groups of pastoral Fulbe have felt that their needs were not met in the traditional group of Muslims to which they belonged. This may be an opening for the preaching of the gospel.
*Fulbe* community, as well as against the Muslim *umma*. Mission approaches and structures that are geared to overcome or at least reduce these problems must developed.

The most important finding in this chapter, however, is related to the importance of cattle to pastoral *Fulbe*. Their livelihood is their cattle, and their mobile life-style is determined by the needs of the cattle. The central role of cattle is reflected in all aspects of the traditional organization of their society. A *Wodaabe Mbororo* from Niger summarizes the significance of cattle in this way:

> The herd is life. It’s food. The herd is strength. It’s his only security. The herd is prestige; it means having the respect of others. It’s glory. Therefore, the loss of the herd is mockery; it’s shame. The herds also shows the friendship of others. If a man no longer has any cows, he no longer has any friends either. . . .

> For us Wodaabe, raising cattle is something very important. It allows us to be a people. Without cattle, there’s no community. Besides, we don’t raise cattle and stay alone, away from the group. Raising cattle is like a path which we must travel together (Maliki 1984:34-35).

Any effective strategy of contextual communication of the gospel must deal with the pastoral *Fulbe’s* relationship with their cattle. An evangelism strategy that separates the *Fulbe* converts from cattle may lead to a few individual conversions but is not likely to lead to the founding of a Christian *Fulbe* community. Therefore, the *Fulbe* concern for cattle has to be taken into account in all phases of the communication of the gospel. When trying to attract the attention of the pastoral *Fulbe* to the gospel, the missionary communicator must consider their felt needs related to cattle and must show--through the use of relevant passages from the Bible--that God is concerned about herders and their cattle. Since the timing of changing religions may seriously affect the convert’s ability to keep his cattle, the convert needs advice in the conversion phase based on a thorough knowledge of the culture. If a convert loses his cattle during his conversion, the mission projects should consider how to help him return to a pastoral life-style. Congregational forms that are geared to the specific needs of pastoral *Fulbe* should be developed. In
short, the pastoral Fulbe people should understand that it is possible to be a truly pastoral Pullo and a Christian at the same time.

The mobility of the pastoral Fulbe and their dispersion all over Northern Nigeria call for a strong cooperation between the mission projects and the local congregations as well as between the denominations. Since effective communication of the gospel is a process of interaction with the gospel and the church, all those concerned about the evangelization of the Fulbe need to work together, each giving his/her evangelistic contribution when they come in contact with the Fulbe.

When are pastoral Fulbe most free to make their own decisions? The study of the social institutions of marriage, government and education indicates that they have the most independence in the third life stage, that is, young adulthood. Only when a man and a woman have married and have had their first child, are they respected as an independent social unit and given freedom to follow their own path in life. The young man is then able to establish his own herd and homestead and is free to move away from his father’s control. Even then, however, good relations with relatives and friends, are important for the family to survive socially and economically. What may hold a Pullo back from making socially unacceptable decisions is the expected inheritance from his father.

When a Pullo reaches the stage of senior adulthood, he is usually one of the respected community leaders and he may therefore find it harder to deviate from the social norms. This means that a pastoral Pullo probably will have fewer problems with an open change of religion after he has reached young adulthood and after his father has died, but before he reaches the stage of senior adulthood. It has been concluded that women in general have much less freedom to make independent decisions. The above findings must the selection of the target group among the pastoral Fulbe for the communication of the gospel and the timing of specific steps in the conversion process (such as open participation in church services and baptism).
One of the felt needs of many pastoral Fulbe is modern education, particularly literacy, which would help them relate to the modern society. Therefore, the churches, with their long tradition of involvement in education, have a great opportunity to express their concern for the Fulbe by offering to teach them to read and write. This skill will help the pastoral Fulbe claim their rights in the modern society, and it will give the church an opportunity to present the gospel to them. This study, however, also showed that many pastoral Fulbe parents are hesitant towards sending their children and young people to school because of their perception that the modern education pulls them away from their pastoral life-style. The church should, therefore, attempt to develop educational programs that are geared toward the needs of the mobile pastoralists and that do not lead the students to non-pastoral professions.

At the same time, this study showed that the vast majority of the pastoral Fulbe are still non-literate and due to the economic situation in Nigeria probably for a long time will remain non-literate. Therefore, it is a great challenge for the church to prove that the gospel is not only for literate people, but that God speaks--through the church--also to non-literate people.

It was noted that there is a general trend towards the sedentarization of the pastoral Fulbe. Over the last centuries more and more Fulbe have settled, and it is not likely that this development will be reversed, stopped, or even slowed down. When a people is undergoing rapid social change, it tends to be more open to new ideas. The sedentarization process so far has been accompanied by increasing Islamization of the pastoral Fulbe. This Islamization may make it more difficult to reach the Fulbe with the gospel. The question becomes whether this rapid social change can open some of the pastoral Fulbe to consider the gospel as a new integrating force in a world that to them seems to be disintegrating. For this openness to exists that the gospel and the church must be understood as relevant to their situation.
It is important that the church is not perceived as representative of the interests of the sedentary agricultural population or of the government, but rather as a trustworthy partner defending their rights and helping them to relate to the modern world, which is often perceived by them as hostile. The diaconical work (the social service) of the mission projects should use as its starting point the actual needs experienced by the pastoral Fulbe themselves. The analysis indicates that the most urgent needs are veterinary and medical help to secure the welfare of cattle and human beings, and literacy and assistance to secure land rights so that they are not completely marginalized by the modern society.
CHAPTER 5
THE RELIGION AND WORLDVIEW OF
THE PASTORAL FULBE

In the previous chapter, the social context of the pastoral Fulbe was analyzed. In this chapter the focus will be the religious context and its significance for the communication of the gospel to the pastoral Fulbe.

In the religion of the pastoral Fulbe in Northern Nigeria today, we can identify three dimensions or structures, which will be analyzed separately, although they overlap and interact considerably. The first dimension, and the most visible to outside spectators, is the Islamic rites, which the Fulbe share with the Muslim majority in Northern Nigeria. The second dimension is what has often been termed superstitious practices, but what I will term crisis rites associated with magic and spirits. This religious structure is basically African and is shared with adherents of traditional tribal religions and many adherents of Islam and even Christianity. The last dimension is Pulaaku, which is related to the pre-Islamic religion of the Fulbe.

In each section, the religious and cultural information from Oumarou Ndoudi as presented in the book Moi, Un Mbororo will be used as the starting point for the analysis of the actual lived religion of the pastoral Fulbe. After the analysis of Islam, magic and spirits, and Pulaaku, an attempt will be made to identify the worldview of the pastoral Fulbe underlying all these religious systems.
There is no doubt that the pastoral *Fulbe* of Northern Nigeria today consider themselves to be Muslims. Town *Fulbe* (and other Muslims) sometimes denigrate the pastoral *Fulbe’s* Islam and consider them to be pagans, while pastoral *Fulbe* accuse town *Fulbe*, who have become heavily influenced by Hausa culture, of having lost their *Fulbe* identity. Leaving final judgment to the to the Muslim *umma* in Nigeria, it may be concluded from the perspective of phenomenology of religions that what the vast majority of the pastoral *Fulbe* practice is an African version of folk Islam (cf. Musk 1994; Gilliland 1986). The Islam of the pastoral *Fulbe* will be analyzed as follows. First, the place of the five pillars of Islam in the life of pastoral *Fulbe* will be evaluated. Then the extent to which pastoral *Fulbe’s* rites of passage are Islamic will be discussed. Finally, the elements that attract pastoral *Fulbe* to a more dedicated Islamic life will be considered.

**The Pillars of Islam**

The most visible sign of the presence of Islamic religion is the pillars of Islam. The question is then, to what extent do pastoral *Fulbe* practice the five pillars of Islam, and how do they understand them.

The declaration of faith in one God and in Muhammad as his prophet (*shahada*) does not seem to play a significant role in the life of the people of Ndoudi. It seems that the *Mbororo’en* regarded Allah as another name for their own supreme deity. Ndoudi very emphatically states that his people, the *Jafu’en* nomadic *Fulbe*, have never been idol worshippers like the surrounding pagans.

We *Mbororo* have always known the name of Allah. We didn’t wait for Usman Dan Fodio to tell us about him! The name of Allah has always

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1 Other ethnic groups in Nigeria such as the *Nupe* also identify the supreme God of their traditional religion with *Allah* (Ray 1976:184).
been on our lips, but we didn’t know who he was. We even swore by Allah! If someone really tried to know God, he’d lift up his hands dumbfounded to the sky, point to the clouds, and say, “There he is and he’s looking at me!” (Bocquené 1988:188).

This ambiguity in the relationship to God is found among many other groups of pastoral Fulbe. A Wodaabe Pullo in Niger concludes that they do not know God, where he is or anything about him, but still they pronounce his name with fear and respect in all circumstances. And they know God has created them, and that he is the one who gives them their cattle, joy and suffering, and everything (Maliki 1984:49-51). The reason pastoral Fulbe know so little about God and their Islamic faith is that they receive very little Islamic education. Those who do receive some Islamic education most often receive it when they are more than twenty years old, and then they only receive a few sessions with a malam, where they mainly learn to perform their daily prayers (Labatut 1975:65).

The five ritual daily prayers (salat) were hardly practiced in Ndoudi’s family during his childhood.

During the years of my youth which I am reliving with you, I had no idea about God or about the fear he should have inspired in me. My older brothers never prayed, neither did our father or mother. At the age when a beard grows, sometimes one or another of my brothers would make the gestures of Moslem prayer, but it seemed they were only practicing. They didn’t want to be too awkward when the day came that they had to do Fulbe² prayers. If they were, they risked not being accepted in a Fulbe home. If they were treated like strange “pagans”, what would they eat during long trips? (Bocquené 1988:7).

Ndoudi points to the sociological motivation for the practice of Muslim prayers. Prayer was a way of identifying with their town Fulbe brothers, whose help they would need when traveling. Later in his life, Ndoudi attended a Qur’anic school and started doing

2 When Oumarou Ndoudi uses the term Fulbe without any qualifications he normally is referring to the town Fulbe, who are known to be much more Islamized than the nomadic Fulbe, and at the same time much less influenced by the traditional culture of the Fulbe, i.e., Pulaaku.
his daily prayers. According to Ndoudi, the degree of Islamization among nomadic Fulbe varies greatly, even within his own family. His uncle Mala Djimaou was sent to a Qur’anic school teacher when he was very young. He became a malam, who later taught the Qur’an to all his children and grandchildren, some of whom also became malamai. In spite of this, he still suffered the scorn of the town Fulbe because of the bad reputation of the Mbororo’en. Mala Djimaou is reported to have said, “Because of those people, we’re all considered bad. Let’s be quiet and let God have the responsibility for judging us. God knows. It wouldn’t do any good to proclaim that I, Mala Djimaou, I am not like other Mbororo; I say my prayers regularly.” And Ndoudi adds the comment: “God distinguishes between true believers and those who are not” (Bocquené 1988:192).

The Mbororo’en tend to become more serious Muslims as they get older. Furthermore it is the opinion of Ndoudi that the Mbororo’en in general are becoming increasingly Islamized, an example of which is that more and more families are now inviting a malam to come to teach them about Islam (Bocquené 1988:184-192).

There is much evidence that pastoral Fulbe in general are not very strict in the performance of their daily prayers. In 1969, Labatut asked sixty-two nomadic Fulbe from the Wodaabe Dageeja in Northern Cameroon about their prayer habits. With three exceptions (out of twenty-three), the youth never prayed; more than half of the adults (seven out of ten) never prayed, but all of the old men and half of the old women prayed always or sometimes (1975:65-66). The observations of Labatut confirm Paden’s findings that “in contemporary rural Kano the pastoral Fulani may not undertake Islamic prayers five times daily until they have a son old enough to tend the cattle” (1973:49).

Similarly, a Jallanko’en Pullo, from a nomadic family living in and around what is today

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Ndoudi says about the older women that “the older they got, the more they prayed, even when they didn’t know how to do it. I’m sure when they were younger, that was the last of their worries . . . the approach of death!” (Bocquené 1988:38).
Taraba state, states that according to their tradition a *Pullo* only begins to be concerned about Islamic prayers when he is twenty years or older (Buba 1998).

It is the concern for the welfare of the cattle that prevents many pastoral *Fulbe* from performing their daily prayers. A typical example of this is the very Islamized *Wodaabe* men in Borno, who according to Stenning invariably missed the dawn prayers when their presence with the cattle was needed, whereas they would pray the evening prayers, which did not conflict with the lighting of the corral fire or the cooperation of husband and wife at the calf-rope at milking time (1966:398).

The statements by a *Wodaabe Pullo* in Niger explains the motivation for prayer found among Ndoudi’s people:

Today a man who doesn’t pray in the morning and evening but who watches others pray feels a certain shame. He fears being treated as a pagan. He doesn’t want to be a pagan, a man that God doesn’t love and who doesn’t love God. Yes, often today prayer depends on shame, on fear of being seen by men, on fear of their judgments. But there’s also fear of the “fire”! Everyone worries about his tomorrow; everyone’s afraid of this “fire” which, as we say, will burn us in the hereafter. We don’t know, but when we pray, we’re told we can diminish the intensity of this “fire” (Maliki 1984:49).

During Ndoudi’s childhood, his relatives did not fast in the month of Ramadan (sawm). On the contrary some of them would not hesitate to eat doughnuts in the middle of the market, while the Muslim merchants insulted them to make them feel ashamed. After Ndoudi grew up and began to keep the fast himself, he would tell his relatives that they made him ashamed by behaving like pagans, and that they would burn in the fire of hell if they did not fast (Bocquené 1988:191).

Labatut’s research among nomadic *Fulbe* in Northern Cameroon showed the same pattern of participation in the fast as in the daily prayers: more than half never fasted. Men were more likely to fast than women, and older people more likely to fast than younger people (1975:65-66). The very Islamized *Wodaabe* in Borno have problems
keeping the fast. According to Stenning, “They observe the fast, but in intention rather than fact, for many concessions are made to the rigors of their life in the bush” (1966:390).

The response of Ndoudi’s grandmother in the following indicates the Mbororo understanding of religion is, and the much more important role in Mbororo culture of almsgiving (zakat) than fasting.

“Look, my dear. Don’t I have a pure heart? What can happen to someone who has a pure heart. What can happen to someone who gives alms and shares her ball with others? Giving alms, that’s enough! . . .

Look, my children, to go to Paradise . . . to go to Paradise, you only have to give alms!” (Bocquené 1988:191-192).

And Ndoudi added that “You never hear, ‘to go to heaven you must do the five prayers’. Absolutely not” (Bocquené 1988:192).

In general the pastoral Fulbe have always rejected that part of zakat which consisted of jangali, cattle tax. According to Maliki law, cattle tax, together with land tax and tithes, is part of the obligatory alms for charitable purposes. The Fulbe’s rejection is due to their desire to pass on as many cattle to the next generation as possible. Among pastoral Fulbe there was a (pre-Islamic) system of help for the poor among the members of their own lineage group. The non-obligatory form of almsgiving, sadaqa, is as seen in the example above, practiced by pastoral Fulbe (Stenning 1959:61-62; Petch 1985:22).

More and more Mbororo’en are going to Mecca on their pilgrimage (hajj). What does pilgrimage mean to them? Ndoudi himself had never performed the pilgrimage, and for him pilgrimage first meant an opportunity to ask God to forgive him his sins and to bless his life. For others, the pilgrimage means an enormous prestige. For a Mbororo there is no more prestigious title than that of alhaji. Furthermore, a Pullo alhaji becomes a member of the fraternity of all the alhajis, which is apparently comprised of Muslims of
all ethnic groups. Finally, pilgrimage is closely connected with commerce. (Bocquené 1988:188-190).

**Islamic Rites of Passage**

The name-giving ceremony, *indeeri*, among the *Mbororo’en* is held seven days after birth. A *malam* is called to perform this rite, which takes place between the calf rope and the paddock, that is, to the west of the huts. At sunrise people gather to shave the baby’s head in milk.

A calabash is brought in which some *barkehi* leaves are floating on top of a little milk. The baby’s hair is dampened, then someone who is skilled at this task shaves the head. . . . The hair isn’t thrown on the ground, but carefully put into the milk that’s in the calabash. When the operation is finished, everything--the milk, hair and *barkehi* leaves--is poured on the mother’s house, just over the doorway (Bocquené 1988:65).

After this first part of the ceremony, which is carried out by some of the elders of the family, the Muslim *malam* takes over. He has consulted his books and looked for a coincidence between a certain text and certain circumstances of the birth to select the best name for the baby. He prays for the baby and pronounces his/her Muslim name.\(^4\) Then two cows are slaughtered by the *malam*, the meat is cooked and distributed to the relatives and other participants according to tradition (Bocquené 1988:63-65).

Name giving ceremonies among other *Fulbe* groups follow more or less the same pattern. In the *indeeri*, it is possible to clearly distinguish Islamic and traditional *Fulbe* elements. The rite is conducted seven days after the birth of the child, but if this day falls on an unlucky day, many *Fulbe* will move it to another day. The head of the child is shaved according to Islamic tradition, but then it is washed in milk, according to old

\(^4\) After the Muslim name-giving, the grandparents choose their own nickname for the baby. Ndoudi was given his name in order to honor a visitor who happened to be present at the *indeeri* ceremony (Bocquené 1988:63).
Fulbe traditions. The child is given a Muslim name, but also a traditional name. Part of the ceremony, including the prayers, is conducted by the Muslim *malam*, but the use of *barkeehi* leaves and the slaughtering of one or more cows point to the traditional Fulbe character of the rite. Whereas the Islamic elements of the rite attach the baby’s identity to the Muslim community, the traditional Fulbe elements attach the baby’s identity to the Fulbe community centered around the bush and the cattle (Labatut 1975:69; R. Nelson 1997:43-45; Stenning 1959:117-118; Dupire 1962:223-231).

Ndoudi and his age-mates underwent circumcision, when they were about seven years of age. Although this is clearly a Muslim rite, the Muslim *malam* was not present during Ndoudi’s circumcision; for Ndoudi the circumcision was done by a barber from a neighboring village. This rite separates the Mbororo boys from the neighboring uncircumcised pagans. In spite of the young age, this rite marks their transition from childhood to adolescence. From this point on, they are expected to “run after the girls” and participate in the dances. During the celebrations of circumcision, a boy is given heifers, indicating that he is on his way toward establishing his own herd (Bocquené 1988:46-49, 246).

The age of circumcision may vary among Fulbe groups. It may take place earlier than age seven or later, but in all cases the rite is not associated with Islamic meanings (Dupire 1962:177; Stenning 1959:112). Among the Wodaabe Dageeja in Northern Cameroon, barkeehi leaves play a role in this rite. Before the circumcision, the boy’s body is washed in water mixed with barkeehi leaves, and after the operation the boy will

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5 This traditional Fulbe element of the name-giving ceremony is very significant for the Mbororo. Ndoudi introduces himself by saying “I’m Ndoudi Oumarou, the son of Koyne. I’m an authentic Mbororo, the son of barkeehi . . . I was shaved with milk” (Bocquené 1988:194). In another context Ndoudi defines the Mbororo identity like this: “I’ve said all there is to say about what makes a Mbororo: the bush and the cow. Certainly we know we’re not the only ones to have cows, but we’re conscious of having been the first to raise cattle. It would be nonsense to talk about a Mbororo who doesn’t have cows, at least a few of them” (Bocquené 1988:194).
rest on a *barkeehi* mat (Labatut 1975:69). Circumcision is not an event surrounded by elaborate ceremonies among the *Fulbe*, the main significance of it in a *Fulbe* context seems to be connected not with Islamic ideas but with cattle.\(^6\)

Marriage, in most cases, is arranged by the families (such a marriage is called a *kooggal* marriage), and is the most elaborate rite among the *Mbororo*’en that Ndoudi describes. Ndoudi indicates that marriage may also take place by elopement or abduction (*deetuki* marriage), although it is not common. *Deetuki* is not prohibited, it is not highly valued either (Bocquené 1988:154-155).\(^7\)

At the name-giving of a girl, the mother of a boy of about four years of age, tries to secure the girl as a wife for her son. The preferential partners are cousins, either the daughter of the paternal uncle, the paternal aunt or the maternal uncle, but never the maternal aunt (Bocquené 1988:249 note 5). A few years later, the father of the boy sends somebody to ask if the promise is still respected. If a positive answer is given, then the parents of the boy send some food with *barkeehi* leaves to the girl’s parents. Some years later, when the girl is about nine years old, the traditional marriage (*kooggal*) is concluded in the absence of the two children. The two families gather, and each family slaughters a steer. The meat from the two steers, which has been prepared separately by the two families, is then mixed and distributed to the guests. Ndoudi describes the meal and its symbolic significance in the following way: “The meal would take place as usual; the women would sit on their side, the men on the other, seated two-by-two, one facing the other in three double files, one next to the other. This made you

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\(^6\) Labatut concludes concerning the circumcision rite of the *Wodaabe Dageeja* that “on constate que l’islam n’a pas de part à cette cérémonie qui semble par contre imprégnée de vieilles traditions peules (one may note that Islam is not part of this ceremony which on the contrary seems to be permeated with old *Fulbe* traditions)” (1975:70).

\(^7\) The *deetuki* marriage, which often follows participation in *geerevol* dances, is not in accordance with Islamic law, but still needs the Muslim ceremony to be completed. *Deetuki* marriages give the women a greater degree in freedom than they have in *kooggal* marriages.
think about the calf rope. It was like a prayer to assure the prosperity of the herd” (Bocquené 1988:164).

When the girl reaches the age of puberty, the formal Muslim rite of marriage (teegal) takes place. In the presence of the two families (but without the young couple), the malam would “ties” the marriage. He makes sure that the dowry is paid to the bride’s father, that the bride’s father has given a heifer (as sadaq\(^8\)) to the bride, and that both parties accept the union. The ceremony is concluded by readings from the Qur’an and offering of prayers.

Some days later, the bride is brought to the bridegroom’s home. During her first pregnancy, however, she goes back to her mother’s house and only returns to her husband’s home, after the child is weaned and can walk well (after two or three years). On that occasion, a party similar to the one held after the teegal takes place. Only then, the bride and bridegroom become an independent family. The father of the bridegroom takes his cattle from his own herd and gives it to his son, and a separate calf rope is set up. The bridegroom then receives gifts of cattle from his family. As Ndoudi said, he “would be happy. He had everything a true Fulani needs: a wife, a child, and a herd” (Bocquené 1988:172).

The Mbororo’en, in general, follow the Islamic rules concerning polygamy, but contrary to the town Fulbe, their wives are never confined.\(^9\) They also go by the Islamic rules concerning divorce and remarriage (Bocquené 1988:174, 181).

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\(^8\) According to Maliki law a gift known as sadaq (in Arabic) and sadaaki (in Fulfulde) is required to ensure that the marriage contract is legally binding. The malam will therefore not perform the ceremony unless three witnesses have testified that the sadaaki has been given (Hopen 1958:86-87).

\(^9\) Although four wives are allowed for a Muslim man, Ndoudi states that he has never seen a Mbororo marriage with more than two wives (Bocquené 1988:160). This may be due to the economic situation of most Mbororo’en, where it might be difficult for a man to maintain properly more than two wives with their children.
Marriage traditions vary from clan to clan but, in general, follow the pattern described by Ndoudi. Among the Wodaabe, the groom's relatives blow milk on the bride, and the mother-in-law tap the girl with barkeehi branches. When the first wife welcomes a second wife, she also taps her with barkeehi branches (Stenning 1959:115; R. Nelson 1997:45f).

In an interesting analysis of marriage (and other) ceremonies among Wodaabe, Fulbe, Stenning points out that their ceremonies are marked by the slaughter and consumption of a feast animal (most often a bull) and that they follow two different procedures. Homtu\textsuperscript{10} is a traditional pastoral Fulbe rite in which the meat is divided according to principles of age and sex. Homtu has mainly to do with the internal life of the clan. Hirsu\textsuperscript{11} is the slaughtering of the animal in the Islamic manner. In the hirsu the carcass is divided longitudinally, and one half is given to the non-Fulbe guests, and the other half is kept for the Fulbe. This procedure has to do with the external relations of the Fulbe. Stenning concludes that whereas all the states of a kooggal marriage among the Wodaabe Fulbe are marked by homtu feasts, the Islamic ceremony with the hirsu ritual is only performed at unimportant events (1966:392-397).

The kooggal marriage customs does not conflict with Islamic traditions, rather in this rite the more orthodox Islamic concerns and traditional Fulbe concerns are welded together. By following the Islamic law, the marriage is accepted in the wider Muslim community, and the following of law is done in a way that does not interfere with the main concern of the marriage, namely cattle, the need to keep the herds of the family together and to transfer the cattle peacefully from one generation to the next.

\textsuperscript{10} The etymological root signifies appeasement or reconciliation.

\textsuperscript{11} The etymological root signifies slaughtering in the Islamic manner.
The Mbororo’en follow Islamic traditions concerning death and burial (Bocquené 1988:45), but when the wealth (cattle) is distributed, the girls are by tradition left out. This tradition, however, is challenged by Islamic jurisprudence. But the cattle are given to the girls, the cattle will be lost for the immediate family and spread among the wider lineage group (Bocquené 1988:181).

Among none of the Fulbe clans do we find any remnants of a pre-Islamic burial ritual, and there are no traces of veneration of the dead (Stenning 1959:47). Among some of the Fulbe, the corpse is buried in a mat made of barkeehi, and a steer is slaughtered (Labatut 1975:70). Following the Wodaabe traditions women are buried to the east, behind the women’s huts, and men are buried to the west near the corral (Dupire 1962:158). Most pastoral Fulbe have such a fear of death that they will not make jokes about death and they try to avoid talking about death (Dupire and Tressan 1955:379).

As stated previously, the traditional system of inheritance among pastoral Fulbe follows the principle that “men should own the cattle and women should own the milk” (Hopen 1958:23). Daughters do not inherit any cattle, rather the oldest son distributes the cattle among all the sons (with the oldest son often receiving the largest share). According to Maliki law, however, all sons get an equal share, whereas daughters only receive one half of a son’s share. Also one tenth of the estate is to be paid in death duties (ushera).

Today pastoral Fulbe try to avoid following the Maliki law concerning inheritance. The most effective way to circumvent the unacceptable Islamic principles is by distributing the cattle to the sons successively as they marry so that when a man dies, no cattle remain to be distributed. Another way to keep the herds together and avoid paying death duties and giving daughters any cattle is to distribute the inheritance without involving the courts or other authorities. The risk of a subsequent court case is reduced
by the traditional aversion to the courts. Taking a relative to court would be a serious breach of *Pulaaku* (Hopen 1958:136-140; Stenning 1959:46-50; Dupire 1962:200-212).

**Religious Development: The Case of Oumarou Ndoudi**

Ndoudi is a good example of a pastoral *Pullo* who earlier in his life followed the ways of the nomadic *Fulbe* (*Mbororo*’en) but who later in life became influenced by the ways of the more sedentary and more Islamized population. “Little by little I was led to reflect on the benefits of religion. In the end, what would a life of entertainment give me? Progressively I understood I had to put religion above everything else; the rest had to come later” (Bocquené 1988:184). One possible reason for Ndoudi’s change of heart, was his state of non-dependence on cattle at the time of the change. At this time, he was earning his living in other ways in villages and towns.\(^{12}\) Another way of explaining this religious development is to refer to Ndoudi’s age.\(^{13}\) In general, as seen above, pastoral *Fulbe* tend to be more concerned about the demands of the Islamic religion in their old age.

Whereas *Pulaaku*, as will be seen in the following section, primarily is concerned with the fertility of the herd and the family in this life, the religion of Islam offers eternal salvation through the forgiveness of sins. This forgiveness and salvation apparently began to attract Ndoudi. The main sins that Ndoudi and the learned *malamai* whom he consulted were concerned about were drinking and adultery. A *malam* told him that he would not be able to get rid of a sinful habit by turning to magic formulas, rather he would have to desire to leave this sin behind, which would enable him to turn to the

\(^{12}\) Ndoudi concludes his story about his change of heart by saying, that “I wouldn’t have done all this thinking, I wouldn’t have had all these emotions if I hadn’t come out of the world of the *Mbororo*” (Bocquené 1988:187).

\(^{13}\) Ndoudi admits that it was often the idea of death that led him to think more about the religion of Islam (Bocquené 1988:187).
Qur’an for help and receive help through drinking the ink and water washed from a slate on which certain Qur’anic texts had been written. The way to heaven through pardon of sins came through observance of the rites and regulations of Islam after the ritual prayers of reciting “the beads, saying for each bead: Istijin Farou!\textsuperscript{14} one hundred times, one thousand times. You have to be persistent if you want to ask God to pardon your sins. Actually God pardons everyone who repents; he pardons them again and again. But one day God will no longer give his pardon” (Bocquené 1988:184).

Ndoudi received instruction from various malamai, and at the time of the interview he was proud of being a Muslim. However, he had never reached the education level of a malam (Bocquené 1988:184-187, 241-241).

**Tensions between Islamic Rites and Traditional Fulbe Concerns**

The pillars of orthodox Islam have been incorporated into the life of pastoral Fulbe, but in such a way that they do not interfere with their concern for their cattle. When the pastoral Fulbe do not follow the Islamic traditions strictly, the reason is often that these traditions conflict with the demands of their cattle-herding life-style. The pastoral Fulbe understanding of the meaning of the five pillars is far from orthodox, and the purpose of their performance of the pillars seems mainly to be a desire to identify themselves with the wider Muslim community.

Whereas the way to practice the five pillars has been adapted to the pastoral Fulbe culture, the traditional Fulbe rites of passage seem to have been Islamized or to have received an Islamic veneer. This is seen most clearly in the two most important rites, name-giving and marriage, where the Islamic element seems to have been added “on top of” the traditional rite. Circumcision, which is probably a rite introduced by Islam, and

\textsuperscript{14} An invocation in which God is begged to pardon the person who prays.
the Islamic burial rites are not very elaborate or important among the pastoral *Fulbe*. For them the ceremonies’ only importance comes from the following events: the setting up of a herd and distribution of inheritance, which the pastoral *Fulbe* try to order without much interference from Islamic principles.

**Spirits and Magic—Crisis Rites**

When pastoral *Fulbe* encounter crises such as diseases and accidents, or when they want to prevent such crises, they most often resort to the power of spirits and magic. The beliefs and practices concerning spirits and magic might be seen as part of the religious system of Islam (termed folk Islam) or as part of the religious system of *Pulaaku*, but they are in this study treated as a separate religious system exactly because they are shared between Islam and *Pulaaku* and are practiced by pastoral *Fulbe*, non-*Fulbe* ethnic groups and followers of other traditional religions in Northern Nigeria.

**Diseases and Accidents**

Diseases among humans and animals are the most frequent type of crises mentioned by Ndoudi. It appears that the *Mbororo’en* distinguish between various types of diseases in terms of their origin and their possible treatments. In most cases diseases are believed to have been caused by spirits or by human beings using the impersonal power of magic or working together with spirits. In a few cases, diseases and accidents are not attributed to either spirits or magic, and in such cases the “medicine of white people” may be used alongside traditional medicine.

Ndoudi suffered from leprosy, just as his mother and one of his brothers did. There are no references to spiritual or magical causes of this disease, and Ndoudi’s father, who was an expert in treating diseases caused by spirits and magic, did not hesitate to refer him to medical clinics. *Mbororo’en* also seem able to distinguish between mental
illnesses caused by spirits and mental illnesses brought about by what might be called natural causes (Bocquené 1988:70-71, 94-95).

In Ndoudi’s understanding, the spirits, jinn, are like human beings, with bodies, but invisible. They live in a parallel world, which only occasionally manifests itself to human beings. For Mbororo’en, the bush in particular is the place of spirits. At Baobab trees (bokki) the noise from villages of the spirits may be heard, or lights may be seen. Children are warned against playing on termite hills because spirits are believed to live there.

Both benevolent and malevolent spirits exist. The malevolent spirits may bring evil, insanity, paralysis or even death, whereas the benevolent spirits may be of help to human beings. Some spirits are the object of prayer. They are contacted through prayer by a person seeking to obtain a certain gift from them, but it can be dangerous for ordinary people to contact spirits because the activity may cause insanity (Bocquené 1988:85-86, 243 note 1-246 note 2).

In the understanding of the Mbororo’en, sorcerers and others through their magical rites are able to harm people because of the fact that everybody has a “double” (mbelu), his/her image or shadow. Whenever a person moves during the daytime, he/she leaves some of his mbelu, which then tries to rejoin the person at nighttime. When the mbelu walks in the dark, it may be caught and harmed by the sorcerer (Bocquené 1988:207).

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15 In 1989 my wife and I visited a Fulbe village outside Yola and found that the senior wife of the head of the village was seriously ill. We had often helped them with medicine for various diseases, but in this case, they said our medicine and the modern hospitals could be of no help because she had been attacked by a spirit. The symptoms were that she would not speak, and that she would tear off all her clothes and run into the bush, wherefore they had to lock her up in a hut.

16 Ndoudi believed that it was due to help from spirits that white people were able to fly, build bridges, and so on (Bocquené 1988:v).
When a pastoral Pullo experiences diseases, accidents or misfortune, he/she does not usually ask “What caused this?” but rather “Who caused this?” And the personal actors within their frame of reference are not first of all God (rewarding/blessing or judging/punishing), but spirits and human beings working together with other spirits or using the impersonal powers of magic.

**Magic**

*Mbororo’en*, just like all other pastoral *Fulbe*, depend a great deal on charms for protection. Some charms are worn all the time, while others are worn only for special protection. Ndoudi gives an example of how his father prepared him for participating in a big *Fulbe* gathering. His father put his magic belt made of leather on Ndoudi and rubbed it with butter to make it shine. Inside were different charms and fibers of certain mixed with the hair of a mule, which his father had prepared for him. Some of the amulets brought protection against snake bites, others against poisoning (Bocquené 1988:62).

Whereas most charms have protective purposes, the *Mbororo’en* also know of charms that can harm others. When Ndoudi was working as a tailor, one day he had a pain in his arm, a swollen hand and a swollen gland in his groin so that he could not work. One of his relatives told him that he was under the effect of an evil charm. Somebody had thrown a “needle charm” at him. After making an incision in his sick arm with a razor blade, he sucked out a number of things with his mouth: a piece of broken glass, human hair, and a needle without an eye. Probably a jealous tailor had used magic to try to prevent him from working. His relative then gave him a protective charm, and his father prepared another charm, which was to be buried where the tailors put their sewing machines in the market. When burying the charm he spoke an evil phrase against the tailor who had harmed him, adding the hope that this tailor could sew absolutely
nothing that day. And so it happened. One of the tailors, obviously, the guilty one, broke his needle so many times that he finally gave up and quit work for that day (Bocquéné 1988:203-204).

Another danger threatening the Mbororo’ en is spells. When a child during the seasonal migrations without any obvious reason swooned and fell off a horse, his family was convinced that a sorcerer had bewitched him. After having undergone the process of fumigation, the child soon recovered. The family had the remedies needed to carry out the fumigation in the above mentioned case. Ndoudi’s father and Ndoudi himself were able to prepare some of their own required charms, but for other charms they had to go to see a malam (Bocquéné 1988:52, 89).

For all pastoral Fulbe, charms, magic belts, and various forms of traditional medicine play a very important role in their life in the bush. Fear of all the dangers they are exposed to, including diseases, attacks from wild animals, thieves, and other malevolent people, lead them to put their faith in a variety of magic objects and practices for the protection of cattle and people. Bello (1998), who was from a nomadic Wodaabe family in Taraba state, stated that “there were charms and magic belts, there was medicine that they placed near the place where the cattle slept so that thieves and hyenas would not touch them. We trusted totally in such things for protection.” Dahiru (1998), who was from a nomadic Kacceccere family in Plateau state, confirmed this practice:

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17 Fumigation is one of the most frequent methods employed. “Certain kinds of smoke that were meant to chase away the Spirits reeked. Powder was thrown on the embers in a pot. The pot was slipped under the blanket that covered the child” (Bocquéné 1988:79). In 1982, I witnessed how non-Fulbe Muslims used this procedure to drive out an evil spirit, which allegedly had attacked this secondary school student in Numan in Adamawa state while he passed by a graveyard.

18 According to Ndoudi, Mbororo’ en always carry with them the necessary remedies for both people and animals because “a sorcerer can come across someone at any place, at any time” (Bocquéné 1988:89).

19 The malam would then write certain Qur’anic texts on a slate, wash the ink off and give it to them to drink. Sometimes his father would add this Qur’anic ink to the natron which he gave his animals to lick (Bocquéné 1988:52).
“We trusted very much in the Malamai, we trusted in what they wrote for us to drink. We trusted in what was written for us to wear as a charm, so that we would be protected from all the evils in the world.” Those pastoral Fulbe who have received Islamic training and have become malamai often spend much of their time in preparing and selling charms, medicine (including poison), and other forms of magic.20

### Divination and Dreams

Ndoudi describes how a malam, who claimed to be a serip,21 performed a divination. An important man came to the malam, believing himself to be under a spell because he could not have a child. Before the visitor brought his request, the malam showed that he already knew who he was. Then bending his head, the serip traced lines on the ground, making points, erasing them, and making more lines. After a long silence he finally gave his response: “I see . . .” When he performed a divination for a Mbororo, he would make him/her sell an animal at once in order to pay (Bocquené 1988:102).

Divination is very widespread among pastoral Fulbe. Often it is performed by malamai, whether Fulbe or non-Fulbe. Gidado (1998), who is from a nomadic Fulbe family in the Gombe area, and who has received years of Islamic training to become a malam like his father, told about his unorthodox activities:

> I taught the Qur’an to my students, just like my father who also was a malam. . . . Later I learned something which God does not like, that is, I learned to tell fortunes by sand-divining (bugun kasa). I did a lot of

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20 Abdullahi (1998), Dawda (1998), and Gidado (1998) all attended Qur’anic schools and became malamai, and for all of them magical practices play a very significant role. Abdullahi and Gidado admitted that they knew that it was wrong, but they continued because of the money they made doing it.

21 This malam in Girei, north of Yola, claimed to be a serip, i.e., a sharif, who is a malam who alleges to descend from the Prophet and therefore deserves great honor. A sharif is often considered to have extraordinary powers. This malam claimed that fire could not burn him. Ndoudi, who stayed with him in order to be taught the Qur’an claims that he was not a true malam but a hypocrite and a liar (Bocquené 1988:101-104).
divination. Many people came to me, and I earned so much money that when you saw me you would think that I was a chief (Gidado 1998).

One popular type of divination is through dreams. According to Ndoudi the Mbororo’en dream a lot. They believe in their dreams, and some of them know how to interpret them. When a woman had dreamt that all the milk she boiled on the fire was saved, Ndoudi’s grandmother interpreted it to mean that she no longer did any charity in her compound. She was told to take the first milk that her husband brought and give it away, because this gesture of generosity would be profitable for her. Dreams may also have a warning or a punishing function or, in connection with diseases, a diagnostic or a healing function (Bocquené 1988:33).

When a man sees meat in a dream, he believes that one of his animals will die. The most fortunate dream is one in which a black steer appears. “What luck for anyone who’s dreamed about this Black Steer of the spirit world, especially if he saw it covering one of our cows! That day he’ll offer his milk to everyone in order to bring blessings on his herd. Seeing cows come out of termite holes is also interpreted as a particularly lucky dream” (Bocquené 1988:33). In the case of the black steer and the cows coming out of termite holes, the material of their dreams is from their myths, and the focus is on the fertility of the herd.

For pastoral Fulbe whose thinking is strongly influenced by Islam, the content of dreams may be different and may need to be interpreted according to Islamic traditions. In all markets in Northern Nigeria a variety of books concerning interpretation of dreams are available from Muslim booksellers. The content of such books no doubt influences

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22 An example of such books is the series of three books called Fassarar Mafarki (Interpretation of dreams) (n.d.) by Isma’ila Sheykh Ibrahim Maijalalaina from Kano. In these books, an Islamic theory of dreams, based on Hadith texts, is presented. Dreams are not comparable to messages given to prophets, because prophesying ended with Muhammed, but dreams are good gifts from God, messages from God to a man or woman about what he/she will do or what will be done to him/her. Muslims have to believe in dreams’ because he/she who doesn’t believe in what he/she has seen in dreams from God, does not believe in God and the next world. Muslims are advised to do ablutions before going to bed and to be chaste in order to have dreams and remember them. Those who lie about dreams will never go to heaven. Dreams
the thinking also of many pastoral Fulbe, either through those Fulbe who have learned to read or through malamai visiting them.\textsuperscript{23} An example of such an interpretation comes from a young man of a nomadic Fulbe family in Borno state who had attended a Qur’anic school. This young man once saw an angel in a dream and therefore was convinced that he would soon die (Abdullahi 1998).

Some dreams, serving the purpose of divination, come without any preparation, but a person in need of guidance can seek a dream through a process of preparations for dreams. Abdullahi (1998) was a student in a Qur’anic school in Gombe state when he became interested in the gospel. When doubting whether he should follow the way of Islam or Christianity, he sought divine counsel in the Islamic way. Before he went to sleep, he performed the ablutions and ritual prayers expecting to get an answer from God in his dream. The procedure employed by Abdullahi resembles the isthikara methods of seeking God’s guidance, which Trimingham calls the “dream method.” In the isthikara, as well as in general preparations for receiving dreams, much emphasis is put on proper ablutions, prayers and recitations, and in particular on the evening prayers. Just as Abdullahi did, a direct request may be addressed to God for a dream in answer to a specific problem (Fisher 1979:228-229; Trimingham 1968:84).

May have three different sources: Apart from the dreams sent from God, there are also dreams from Satan, and some dreams may merely be innocent reflections of the dreamer’s situation before going to bed. The bulk of the content of the three is rules of interpretation of dreams. The greatest gift concerning dreams is to see Prophet Muhammed; Satan is not able to parade himself in the form of the Prophet in a dream. Interpretations are given concerning dreams about prophets, saints, the Qur’an, fire and water, food, open and closed doors, people and animals, spirits and Satan, and so on (Cf. Fisher 1979).

\textsuperscript{23} In many cases the Muslim dreamer is able to interpret his/her own dreams. When the dreamer is not able to interpret the dream, the help of Muslim clerics is often sought. Apart from interpretation of dreams malamai are also often sought for help concerning incubation of dreams and when the appropriate actions are to be taken after the interpretation of the dream (Fisher 1979:223-241). See also the previous note.
Muslims recognize that some dreams may come from evil sources. Dreams may even come from the devil with the purpose of misleading people (Fisher 1979:224). When a young *Fulbe* boy (Mamudu 1998) had been in contact with Christians, he told his father that he had had a dream in which Jesus told him to get up and follow him, his father apparently suspected that the devil was trying to mislead his son through the dream. In order to stop this evil influence, he ordered a hen to be sacrificed.

**Spirit Possession**

One day, when some children were playing in the bush, Ndoudi’s younger brother disappeared. When he was found, he was unconscious. The adults in the camp immediately diagnosed the disease to be an attack from spirits. The healing methods included the spitting of verses from the *Qur’an* (written in ink on a slate and washed off into a bottle) and other magical formulas, ointments and lotions, fumigation, dance and music therapy. In the dance and music therapy, the leader of the music group invoked the names of a multitude of spirits. When he fell on the name of the spirit that had possessed the child, the child suddenly woke up. He shouted and ran towards them and began to dance frantically to the musicians’ rhythms. Other people in the neighborhood, who had at one time been possessed by the same spirit, joined in the dance.

When the music and dance was over, the child went to his bed and fell asleep, and the next day he was normal again. The only change in the child was that he had an irresistible urge to dance. In such a state of trance, he exhibited magical powers and exercised the gift of divination. Such a person was said to have received the gift of a *boka* (a native doctor or a wizard). Once exorcised, such a person is freed from the evil

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24 Fisher lists the following categories of dreams in a West African Muslim context: “meaningless, evil (in the sense of misleading), good (in the sense of true), those concerning oneself, and those concerning others whether individuals or the whole community” (1979:226).
that possessed them and only left with the good gifts, such as divination, conjuring, knowledge of medicinal plants and exorcism (Bocquené 1988:78-80).

Ndoudi’s sister also became possessed by a Bori spirit. Through that possession she was able to make her husband do things for her that a Fulbe husband was normally not expected to do. When she was affected by the spirit, she would call her husband by name and she would refuse to eat unless her husband was present with her, which was shameful for her husband. She only got well when her husband paid for some musicians to come and play for her so that she could dance (Bocquené 1988:80-81).

Some Mbororo ‘en call these spirits Girka, whereas they are known among the Hausa as Bori. The Bori cult was known among the Hausa people prior to the jihad, after which the Bori cult was banned. The cult, however, survived in many Islamic societies throughout West Africa, and it became most popular among women, whose legal and economic status was significantly reduced under Islam. Through the Bori cult they were able to regain some of their independence and status (Ray 1976:185). In Northern Nigeria this cult is today mainly associated with the Maguzawa (the non-Muslim Hausa people), where the female devotee is called ‘Yar Bori (daughter of Bori), but some Muslims from various tribes still seem to be engaged in this cult (Doi 1984:89-92).

Many pastoral Fulbe experience frequent attacks by spirits.26 A Wycliffe missionary, who had spent several weeks following a nomadic group of Fulbe from Niger state during their seasonal migration, observed that they were scared of evil spirits and that this fear played a great part in their lives. For example, they did not dare to sleep at

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25 Most of the Bori devotees are women. A male Bori devote is called Dan Bori (son of Bori).

26 Bello (1998), who is from a nomadic Wodaabe family in Taraba state, explained that before he became a Christian, spirits (aljannu) would frequently bother him and his family, and that they tried to protect themselves against attacks from the spirit by magical means. Gidado (1998) explained that evil spirits were a problem for him before he became a Christian, and that they only stopped being a problem when he was baptized.
the riverside for fear of the water demon. Some of them were already demon possessed, like a young girl who claimed the ability to communicate with animals and who walked into the bush and came home naked and bleeding (Winger 1998). Some Fulbe complain that they cannot sleep at night because evil spirits are tormenting them (Veltkamp 1982:4). Others complain of attacks by evil spirits leading to mental and physical diseases.

**Tensions between Spirits and Magic and Islam**

There is much evidence of an unresolved tension in the minds of the Mbororo’en between magical practices and the demands of Islam. Ndoudi refers to a magical rite for protection of the herds gathered in a camp in a woody area from lightning by nicking all the trees by a machete. Ndoudi admits that a Muslim will do this with a bad conscience. The reason for the guilty feelings lies in the very nature of magic, believing in the power of a rite without reference to God. In some magical rites a Pullo has to use objects that are unclean for Muslims. Some Fulbe try to reconcile this tension by saying, “This will work if God wants it to” (Bocquené 1988:21, 245).

There is, however, also a great overlap between Islam and rituals involving spirits and magic. Even orthodox Islam recognizes the presence and power of spirits (jinn) and of charms. Also among the Mbororo’en, there are many cases of the use of charms with Qur’anic texts, and the use of the liquid washed from a slate on which a specific Qur’anic text had been written (Bocquené 1988:52). Various Mbororo’en seem to draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable rituals involving spirits and magic differently. Ndoudi considered killing somebody by magic, manipulating unclean things for magical purposes, and infringing on the power of God through magic to make people meet so that they could be married to be a sin for a Muslim (Bocquené 1988:206).
The world of the pastoral *Fulbe* is a world full of innumerable dangers, visible as well as invisible. To face this world without the help of the powers of spirits and magic is almost inconceivable. All kinds magical rites with the purpose of protecting cattle and human beings against diseases and accidents and with the purpose of healing their diseases seem to be generally accepted (although some of their practices might involve aspects that, strictly speaking, are prohibited by Islamic law). On the other hand, all rites of black magic (sorcery and witchcraft) with the aim of harming or killing others are discouraged or even prohibited in various degrees depending on the circumstances. When specifically Islamic elements occur in rites of healing or protection, they are invariably used in a typically magical way.27

**Pulaaku**

*Pulaaku* plays a very crucial role in the life of pastoral *Fulbe*, but it is difficult to define *Pulaaku*, as is seen from the following statement of Ndoudi.

A *Mbororo* can do without religion, but he can’t live outside the rule which make a Fulani what he is. We have a way of behaving which belongs only to us, the people of the world of cows and the bush. We have denied this way of behaving to the town *Fulbe*. They’ve abandoned it. This code of life is our heritage. We knew it long before we knew the religion of Mohammed. But it’s sometimes difficult today in *Mbororo* families which practice Islam to divide things and to distinguish what comes from *poulakou* and what comes from religion (Bocquené 1988:194).

Is *Pulaaku* religion?28 Yes, but it is more than religion. Just as Islam in principle encompasses all aspects and dimensions of life, so does *Pulaaku*, the difference being

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27 Kraft (1996:205-206) and others distinguish between magic and religion. Magic is a mechanical approach to supernatural beings with the purpose to control supernatural beings and powers through the use of certain language or ritual. Religion is a personal approach in which the supernatural powers are addressed in a submissive and reverent way.

28 Alhaji Abubakar Mohammad Kabri, a famous Islamic scholar from Taraba state, said that “*Pulaaku*, before the coming of Islam, was the religion of *Fulbe*” (Ja’e 1999).
that Islam is universalistic whereas *Pulaaku* is very particularistic. *Pulaaku* is what makes a person a *Pullo*. The concept of *Pulaaku*, however, is dynamic, so that the understanding of what makes a person a *Pullo* may differ from area to area, from clan to clan, and from period to period (Bruijn and Dijk 1995:199-201). There do seem among the pastoral *Fulbe* in Northern Nigeria and the neighboring countries to be some constant elements in *Pulaaku*.

When asked, what is *Pulaaku*, *Fulbe* will often present the following three definitions. *Pulaaku* is *Fulfulde*, it is *barkeehi* (the tree of blessing), and it is *hakkiilo* (good sense), *munyal* (self-control), and *semteende* (reserve). The myths and traditions of the pastoral *Fulbe*, which express who they are, are stored in and transmitted by their *Fulfulde* language. The identity of the pastoral *Fulbe* is intimately related to their cattle, whose fertility and protection they try to secure through rites in which the *barkeehi* tree of blessing plays a key role. For the *Fulbe* cattle herders to survive and prosper in the bush, they need the virtues of *hakkiilo* (good sense), *munyal* (self-control) and *semteende* (reserve).

The Language of *Pulaaku*

Most *Mbororo ‘en* are non-literate and depend entirely on oral communication. During Ndoudi’s childhood much emphasis was placed on teaching the children to master the *Fulfulde* language.

Some evenings we went to find our grandmothers or other old women so we could hear their stories. We knew the tales by heart because we’d

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29 Martin Zachary Njeuma notes that *Pulaaku* has been defined very differently. Some have given it a chauvinistic, exclusive definition as “a mark which one obtains at birth and which distinguishes *Fulbe* from the non-*Fulbe*,” whereas others have seen *Pulaaku* as “virtues that can be taught and acquired in the course of socialisation.” Njeuma himself defines *Pulaaku* as a concept that “embraces *Fulbe* traditions and all that is worth striving for in a *Fulbe* home and society” (1997:7), which is in accordance with the my understanding of *Pulaaku* as comprised of the language, the ethical code, the ritual and other traditions.
heard them over and over again. Our grandmothers were very aware of the fact that they were teaching us stories and they were teaching us how to speak our language correctly. Since we had no books, what else could we do? (Bocquené 1988:34).

The stories were not just entertainment, but used by the elders for the socialization of the children. Through stories children would learn about the world and about how they were expected to behave. Both through the form (Fulfulde language) and the content (lessons) of these stories, the children were brought up to become real Fulbe (Bocquené 1988:34-43). Stenning points to the centrality of Fulfulde by claiming,

The prime factor in Pulaaku is the Fulani language. Fulfulde means not only the language spoken by Fulani, but the whole range of rights and duties peculiar a Pullo. Thus to say of a European that he ‘hears Fulfulde’ implies an acquaintance with the language. to say that he “has Fulfulde” implies not only this, but that he is acquainted with Fulani social usage (1959:55).

Today in Northern Nigeria, the pastoral Fulbe say that the town Fulbe have no Pulaaku. The reasons given are that they do not have cows and that they (increasingly) speak Hausa instead of Fulfulde. A good command of Fulfulde is a prerequisite for being considered a true Pullo.

In the 18th and the early part of the 19th century, Fulfulde was the sacred language (only surpassed in importance by Arabic) for many Muslims, Fulbe as well as non-Fulbe, all over West Africa. Soon after the establishment of the Sokoto caliphate, however, Hausa came to replace Fulfulde as the sacred language of Islam in Northern Nigeria. As a result, in Northern Nigeria today it is difficult to find any Islamic books, booklets or tracts in Fulfulde in the Islamic book shops or in the markets. Fulfulde has increasingly become the language only of the pastoral Fulbe.

Much of the culture, including the religion, of pastoral Fulbe has been preserved within the Fulfulde language through stories, fables, riddles, proverbs, and songs, all of

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30 Sometimes pastoral Fulbe will even use the word Fulfulde not only about their language but about all the elements of Pulaaku, so that Fulfulde and Pulaaku are used interchangeably (Ja’e 1999).
which are transmitted from generation to generation orally. If Fulfulde is replaced by Hausa as the mother tongue, as is happening with the majority of the town Fulbe in Northern Nigeria, all this folklore in Fulfulde will eventually be forgotten, with serious consequences for the Fulbe culture. As G. Pfeffer has pointed out in his analysis of the oral literature of the Fulbe, “The value of folk-lore for a community becomes obvious as soon as we consider its importance as an integrating force. Its content embraces tribal tradition, myths, songs, tales and fairy-tales, all of which are inter-related with the social life of the people in such a way that their removal would create a serious social disturbance” (1939:286-287).

The Ethical Code of Pulaaku

In orthodox Islam, Islamic law, Shari’a, is intended to lay out the pattern for all aspects of life. The ultimate authority of the Shari’a comes from God through his eternal word, the Qur’an, and the example of his Prophet, the Sunna. A few elements of the Shari’a are found in the code of life of the Mbororo’en. Some have been mentioned, and others include the prohibition of eating or selling a cow that died before it was slaughtered in the Islamic way (Bocquené 1988:26, 54). But the primary source of the Mbororo code of conduct is not the Shari’a but Pulaaku.

from the time we were very young, we understood that the weight of what we call poulakou was on us. To practice poulakou is to live like a true Fulani, to have honor. It’s like a code of manners. It belongs only to us, the Mbororo of the bush. The Fulbe of the towns and villages don’t follow it any longer. All the non-Fulbe—with a certain disdain, we call them kado—are excluded from poulakou. It applies to all details of our daily life, in the family and likewise with neighbors and strangers (Bocquené 1988:7).

The Mbororo’en say “Pulaaku woni hakkilo, munyal, semteende,” that is, “Pulaaku is good sense (intelligence, forethought), self-control (patience, fortitude), and reserve (shame, modesty).” These are the qualities that make a person a true Pullo. This
definition of *Pulaaku* is shared with all pastoral *Fulbe* in Northern Nigeria and the neighboring countries and even beyond.

*Hakkiilo*, good sense, intelligence and forethought, which according to tradition has its seat in the head, is mainly a technical virtue originally related to the proper handling of the herd. A herder with *hakkiilo* gathers information about pastures, inspects his herd every morning, and observes the rites and taboos (Stenning 1959:56; R. Nelson 1997:40).

It is the cattle and the life with the cattle in the bush that gives the *Pullo* herder *hakkiilo*. Conversely, loss of cattle through epidemics may also rob a herder of all his *hakkiilo* so that he begins to behave like a mad man wandering around in the bush unclothed and eating dust looking for his cattle (Stenning 1959:59).

*Munyal*, self-control, patience and fortitude, which according to tradition has its seat in the heart, is the ability to bear the life of hardship and suffering with the herd and the family in the bush. Without *munyal*, pastoral *Fulbe* are unable to carry out their duties in the heat of the dry season. *Munyal* helps them not to give up when there are epidemic diseases among the cattle (Stenning 1959:55-56; R. Nelson 1997:40). A *Fulbe* woman from Niger expresses the need for *munyal* with a very poetic reference to the nature of life in the bush.

Every man’s life is made up of joy and suffering. Do you know what we compare joy to? It is like the little drops of milk which squirt all over you body when you milk the cows. And do you know what suffering is like? Like the sparks which burn you when you sit around the fire. The suffering of fire and the joy of milk; you know very well those two things don’t resemble each other. And in each person’s life, there’s fire and milk (Maliki 1984:15).

*Munyal* is also the ability to control one’s temper, which keeps the *Pullo* from misbehaving or saying something stupid. The heart is like milk on a fire, it has a
tendency to rise. *Munyal* is like the cold water on the “rising milk” (Bocquené 1988:198).

The possession of women and children fills the *Pullo* herder with *munyal* so that he can endure all the hardship of life with the cattle in the bush. Without women and children, there is no reason for him to suffer for his cattle (Stenning 1959:59).

*Semteende*, reserve, shame and modesty, which according to tradition has its seat in the belly, is the virtue of behaving correctly in personal relations. *Semteende* tells a *Pullo* how to relate to and behave in the presence *Fulbe* neighbors, grandparents, paternal and maternal uncles and aunts, cousins on the side of the father and on the side of the mother.

Ndoudi gives an example of how to behave if a neighbor’s cattle comes to lick a *Pullo*’s salt. A young herder is not supposed to drive them away right away, only when his father gives him permission, and then his father will instruct him to drive them away very gently. There are also rules concerning the relations between husband and wife, and parents and children, but most of these rules relate to their interactions in public, whereas close relatives may interact in an informal manner in private. The rules of *semteende* invades all areas of life, down to the smallest details: how to greet people, how to find one’s proper place in gatherings, how to eat (and what to eat), how to bargain, how to approach a house, and how to travel. Of the three virtues *semteende* seems to be the most important. As Ndoudi puts it, “For a Fulani, shame is sin. To be ashamed is to commit a sin” (Bocquené 1988:199).

*Semteende*, like *hakkiilo* and *munyal*, originally was closely related to the welfare of the cattle. *Semteende* involves cooperation with kinsmen regarding cattle. This cooperation is most clearly seen in the tradition called *habbinaaye*, the tradition of the loaned cow. When a *Pullo* has lost all his cattle because of cattle disease or another misfortune, his relatives and friends each loan him a cow. The loaned cow stays with
him until it has delivered three calves and is then returned to its owner. Thereby the unfortunate herder can rebuild his herd (Maliki 1984:39-42).

Since individual freedom is valued very highly among all pastoral Fulbe (cf. Riesman 1977), and the ethical code of Pulaaku limits this freedom, tension exists. This tension is expressed in this Fulbe poem

Night is better than day--
but it withholds understanding.
Adultery is better than marriage--
but it withholds descendants.
Friendship is better than kinship--
but it withholds an inheritance
(Grayzel quoted in Veltkamp 1983:14)

The Fulbe resolve this tension by allowing themselves, at certain times, to behave in a more unrestrained way in the bush and in the night, whereas they are bound by the rules of Pulaaku in their public life, during the day in the camp (Veltkamp 1983:10-14).

**The Fertility Rites of Pulaaku**

One Fulbe saying goes, “Pulaaku, its the Barkeehi fiber (or Barkeehi leaf)” (Bocquené 1988:194). Barkeehi represents the Fulbe’s attachment to cattle and the bush and meets the needs of “people of the world of cows and the bush.”

If we’ve chosen the barkeehi tree as our emblem, it’s because we find in it everything a herder in the bush needs, especially fibers which are fresh and supple in all seasons. Without fibers, there would be no cords and no herding! The leaves, bark and roots of this tree are also useful to us. We make them into powder which we use to insure the fertility of our herds. This tree has a good name: “the tree of blessing,” the tree that brings good happiness. Anyone who understands the Mbororo knows that they never do anything important without having a leaf from this tree of happiness in their hands (Bocquené 1988:194).

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31 The identification of barkeehi with Pulaaku is also understood from the fact that the words barkeehi and Pulaaku can be used interchangeably in many situations. Prayers, requests or commands can be issued in the name of Pulaaku or in the name of barkeehi (Bocquené 1988:194-195).
Barkeehi, which is a small shrub in the bush called Bauhinia Reticulata, is called the “tree of happiness” or “tree of blessing” by the Fulbe. The plural of barkeehi is barkeji is very similar to the word for blessings, barkaji (from Arabic baraka). For the pastoral Fulbe, just as for the Israelites in the Old Testament, blessing is closely connected with fertility. The barkeehi tree is used for both practical purposes, for medico-magical purpose and for ritual purposes, and for all of the purposes associated with the fertility of the herd (Bocquené 1988:194-195, 244).

The Mbororo’en rarely perform a ritual or celebrate a festivity without the leaves or some other part of this tree. The role of the barkeehi leaves in the Islamic rites of passage of birth, naming, circumcision, marriage, and death have already been mentioned. The key role of barkeehi as a symbol of blessing or fertility in many other rites of the pastoral Fulbe has been confirmed by studies of pastoral Fulbe all over West Africa (R. Nelson 1997; Stenning 1959; Hopen 1958; Dupire 1962, 1970; Labatut 1975). This role can be seen in this brief overview of rites, not all of which are today practiced by all pastoral Fulbe in Northern Nigeria:

- Barkeehi leaves are buried under the fire near the paddock.
- Barkeehi leaves and milk are buried together with the pieces of the ears of the cattle cut off during the marking of the cattle.
- When a Pullo borrows a cow from a friend or relative, he will put barkeehi branches on the corral of his friend or relative.
- At the annual gathering of the Wodaabe, the Fulbe will greet each other holding barkeehi branches in their hands.

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32 The tree is two to four feet tall and has leaves shaped like a heart. Sometimes the leaves are closed and look like clasped hands in prayer.
• Before a chief is installed he will sleep on a bed covered with a mat made of *barkeehi*, and boughs of *barkeehi* are placed beneath the throne when he is taking office.

• After a woman gives birth, the placenta is buried in *barkeehi* leaves (Labatut 1975:88; R. Nelson 1997:49-50).

One rite which hardly has any *barkeehi* element in it is the *soro*, which only some of the clans have ever practiced, and only a few practice today.

The close association of *barkeehi* with fertility is also evident from the fact that the calf rope, *daangol*, which is a rope made from cowhide, is intertwined with *barkeehi* fibers. The *daangol*, which separates the male section of the camp to the west from the female section to the east, is the line to which the calves (representing the fertility of the herd) are tied. *Daangol*, which has great symbolic value, has also been used as a name for rites or elements in rites, such as the line of dancers in the *geerewol* dance and many other *Fulbe* dances. The *geerewol* involves a beauty contest in which girls may chose the best looking men and spend the night with them. This dance often results in elopement

33 The *soro* rite, which is described briefly in Chapter 4, is not practiced by all nomadic *Fulbe*. For example, it is practiced by the *Jafu’en*, but not by the *Wodaabe Fulbe*. One of the functions of this rite is to test the manhood of the young men and thereby prepare them for the tough life of the bush, caring for the cattle, defending the cattle against wild animals and thieves. According to old *Fulbe* in Northern Nigeria, this was the original meaning of *soro*, but nowadays, they complain *soro* has been spoilt through the introduction of senseless fighting and drinking (Ja’e 1999). Ndoudi sees *soro* in the context of the boy-girl relationship. “You must understand if there were no girls at the *soro*, there would be no interest in the *soro*. The custom would quickly disappear.” He is aware that *soro* is forbidden by the *Qur’an*, and that *Qur’anic* students are not allowed to participate in it. Still it is hard for Ndoudi to imagine that his clansmen will ever give up this rite. According to a *Jafu’en* legend the origin of the *Jafu’en soro* is related to the jihad of Dan Fodio. Dan Fodio wanted all *Fulbe* to participate in his holy war, but the *Jafu’en Mbororo’en* had been forgotten. Then one day some *Jafu’en* women in the market learned that Dan Fodio planned to make up for his omission. By choice or by force, he wanted them to be part of the holy war. The women ran home to their men in the bush and told them everything. The next day the men prepared an ambush for Dan Fodio and his people, but Dan Fodio had the gift of vision and took notice of what was happening. In the last moment he turned away from the ambush, shouting to the *Jafu’en*, “Fight among yourselves! Hit each other!” And so they did. “This is the origin of the *soro*. We’re quick to say it was born at the end of the prayer of a holy person and that no one will be able to stop it” (Bocquené 1988:115-116).
even with young married women (deetuki marriage). Some anthropologists have wondered how the kooggal and the deetuki marriage systems can live side by side in a society in which the virtues of Pulaaku and the behavior at geerewol dances leading to elopement play such an important role. Labatut and R. Nelson, however, have concluded, based on observation, that this rite has so many elements (prominent among them are the barkeehi leaves) which all point to fertility, that the geerewol dance is not an institutionalization of licentiousness, but rather a fertility rite.

It is clear that barkeehi leaves symbolize fertility, or rather are used to bring about fertility, and that fertility plays a central role in most Fulbe rites. These rites are elements of Pulaaku (R. Nelson 1997:40).

A parallel symbol to barkeehi is milk, kosam. It also symbolizes fertility and is used in many of the same rites in which barkeehi leaves are used such as naming ceremonies, weddings, installations of chiefs, annual gatherings, and markings of cattle. Whenever a guest arrives at another’s home, he/she is immediately after the greetings offered some milk to drink. Milk is the source of life, a privileged gift, and a mark of hospitality and friendship. The offering of milk is the most frequent fertility rite among the Dageeja Fulbe. Sometimes in the morning a leader of a camp gathers the children

34 Usually, married men and women stop participating in the geerewol dance when they have had their first child and have established their own homestead.

35 Among the many elements of the geerewol ritual, which all point towards the goal of fertility, are the following: “the right phase of the moon and days of the week must be chosen. Two groups of the same clan, but of different lineage must be pasturing their herds in proximity with one another. Invitations pass between the two groups. The host family prepares the dancing space with a place for the fire (symbolizing the fire with magical properties near the cattle corral?). The guests arrive with Barkeehi boughs after having anointed themselves with yoodo [material with magic powers to attract the attention of somebody] and pouring the remainder on a termite hill (symbol of fertility). Barka is the most common expression used for a fertile herd. The expression used for the line of dancing men is daangol (calf rope) which is the central symbol of fertility in the home. The most beautiful girls (about three) become the first judges of the attractiveness of the men. They are expected to go off into the night and engage in sexual relations with total disregard of lineage affiliation and current marriage commitment. These passing relationships may provoke elopement. That seems to be part of the price men are willing to pay in order to host and participate in the geerewol. The ceremony is for a prescribed length of time, and at the end, the visiting party again blesses the host’s herd with Barkeehi” (R. Nelson 1997:56).
near the cattle rope and gives them a calabash of fresh milk to drink. Then they pray and the leader of the camp throws the remaining milk on the pole of the cattle rope in order that “quina njaray kosam, nyalbi kebay barka (the spirits of the herd may drink the milk and bless the calves)” (Labatut 1975:79).

**Pulaaku** is what makes a man or woman into a *Pullo*, and according to Ndoudi “it would be nonsense to talk about a *Mbororo* who doesn’t have cows, at least a few of them.” For a pastoral *Pullo*, the attachment to cattle and to the bush is part of *Pulaaku*. This attachment to cattle is symbolized by the *barkeehi* leaves, which have a sacramental function conveying the blessing of God to the *Fulbe* in the form of fertility of both herd and family. Whereas R. Nelson sees *Pulaaku* and fertility as two distinct cultural themes, fertility having the overriding power (1997:56-57), my analysis suggests that fertility is a key element in *Pulaaku*.

Closely related to the *barkeehi* element in *Pulaaku* is the practice of “medicine of the bush” and taboos, *mboda*, both of which are indispensable to the shepherd. The main focus of these practices is also the well-being or fertility of the herd and the family, as they are exposed to the dangers of the life in the bush.

Soon after Ndoudi was circumcised at the age of seven, his father began to pass to him the knowledge about the medicines of the bush (from leaves, bark, and roots), which he had once learned from his own father. One of the most famous forms of medicine found throughout Northern Nigeria is *karfa*, which

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36 “Que Dieu écarte le mal et envoie le bien; que Dieu te fasse prospérer selon ton désir, que Dieu te donne ce que tu demandes (May God remove the evil and send the good, may God let you prosper according to your desire, may God give you what you ask for)” (Labatut 1975:79).

37 L. N. Reed (1932:429) distinguishes between *Pulaaku* and the taboos of the *Fulbe* (*mboda*), because the *Mawdo laawol Pulaaku* has no responsibility regarding the supervision of the observance of them. I have included in the concept of *Pulaaku* the specifically *Fulbe* taboos, *mboda*, because they seem to serve the same purpose as the other parts of *Pulaaku*, namely the fertility of the herd and the family. It should be noted, however, that *Fulbe* taboos differ from one clan to another.
made the cows distrustful and mean when necessary. He [Ndoudi’s father] spilled power on the glowing red embers. The smoke blew toward the herd. Thanks to that, the animals were alerted immediately of any movement. They were on guard against the approach of a farmer, especially if he had bad intentions toward them. One vulture head—dried, pounded, and sifted— is put into this powder (Bocquené 1988:51).

Although there is much overlap between the herdsmen’s knowledge of magic and general knowledge of magic in Northern Nigeria (as described in the section entitled spirits and magic), there still seems to be significant differences. This knowledge of magic, which Ndoudi calls “medicines of the bush,” was kept among the Fulbe, its main focus being the fertility of the herd and the family. Furthermore the preparation and dispensation of the “medicine” is often associated with the cattle. For example, some powders would not be effective, unless they were prepared after the herd had returned to the paddock. Fulbe herdsmen often do not maintain a strict division between natural and supernatural causes of disease, and they do not distinguish clearly between herbal medicine and magic (McCorkle and Mathias-Mundy 1992).

Another form of religious knowledge is mboda, taboos. Each clan has its own taboos. Most famous for their taboos are the Wodaabe, whose name means “those with taboos.” A Wodaabe herder in Niger says that his people’s greatest fear is taboos. “Failure to observe taboos, those of the clan and those of one’s family, destroys all happiness and wipes out all wealth. It’s the violation of these taboos which kills herds and their owners” (Maliki 1984:46).

Among the taboos of the Wodaabe is the “taboo of the branch.” If a Bodaado cuts a branch with an axe or drags it along the ground to the west of the camp where the herd gathers, it is believed the cows will die and their owner will have an accident. Among all pastoral Fulbe, there are taboos about certain days of the week and of the

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38 Singular of Wodaabe
lunar month. On these certain days, they cannot move camp or receive visitors (Maliki 1984:47).

**Tensions between *Pulaaku* and Islam**

Ndoudi is well aware that there is a tension in *Mbororo* culture between *Pulaaku* and Islam, but in the case of conflict the *Mbororo’en* will generally give priority to the demands of *Pulaaku*. “A *Mbororo* can do without religion, but he can’t live outside the rules which make a Fulani what he is” (Bocquené 1988:194). Stenning, in his very perceptive essay “Cattle Values and Islamic Values in a Pastoral Population,” concludes his analysis of the tensions between Islam and *Pulaaku* among *Wodaabe* in Borno state, by stating,

> In the range of ceremonies which have to do primarily with the individual in his passage through life, there is a readiness and a desire to hallow the occasion with Islamic prayers and observances. . . . But where changes in the rights over cattle are concerned no Islamic ceremony is countenanced, even in respect of the individual whose change of status is implicit in the event. . . . *Wodaabe* herds are continuous objects of magico-religious observances in their own right, and no Islamic rite is allowed to impinge upon these (1966:398).

Among the ceremonies, which are condemned by Muslim leaders, are the *soro* beating contest and the *geerewol* dance, because both are associated with magic and sexual licentiousness. When Ndoudi attended a *Wodaabe geerewol* dance (the *Jafu’en* do not practice this dance), he asked a *Wodaabe* friend of his about the components and meanings of the dance, his friend admitted that “the malums and the modibo are always saying our *guerewol* dance is an abomination before God. It’s Satan who leads this dance.” Asked whether it would still be possible for the dancers to do their Muslim prayers, he responded, “What do our activities during the days of *guerewol* have to do with religion? That’s the last of our worries. This isn’t the place to pray. Anyone who
comes here gets rid of that worry; but he can find it again, if he wants to, when he goes back to his normal every-day life” (Bocquené 1988:137).

The *Wodaabe Fulbe* that Ndoudi refers to know that the *soro* contest, for which the *Jafu’en* are so famous, is against the religion of Islam, but still many of them are not inclined to give it up. Pastoral *Fulbe* experience much conflict between the demands of *Pulaaku* and those of Islam. Ndoudi’s explanation of why *Mbororo’en* sometimes resort to provoking an abortion when an unmarried girl becomes pregnant is that “When the *Mbororo* have to choose, they prefer to sin against religion rather than against *poulakou*. They’re really afraid of being dishonored by the arrival of a bastard in their family!” (Bocquené 1988:183).

As mentioned earlier, *Pulaaku* is a dynamic concept. Over the years Islam has increasingly become an influence among the pastoral *Fulbe*. Its influence has become so great that Islam (although not in its most orthodox form) is considered by an increasing number of people is considered to be an indispensible element of *Pulaaku*. This does not mean that the *Shari’a* code has replaced the *Pulaaku* code; the pastoral *Fulbe* practice a form of Islam that integrates many practices that are not prescribed by Islam and some that are proscribed by Islam. Still Islam is becoming part of the *Fulbe* identity. The fusion of Islam and *Pulaaku* is reflected in Ndoudi’s statement “it’s sometimes difficult today in *Mbororo* families which practice Islam to divide things and to distinguish what comes from *poulakou* and what comes from religion” (Bocquené 1988:194). This fusion is also seen in a ceremony held in celebration of a *Pullo* who has finished his *Qur’anic* studies and is conferred the Islamic title of *malam*. In this ceremony, the *Fulbe* spectators come with *barkeehi* leaves in their hands. Ndoudi wonders, “is this a way of showing the union of religion and *poulakou*?” (Bocquené 1988:194).
Ever since the pastoral *Fulbe* from the time of Dan Fodio found themselves in an Islamic state under the leadership of their town *Fulbe* brothers, the *Pulaaku* system has come under stress. Frantz has summarized the trend like this,

The non-Islamic beliefs and rituals of the Mbororo’en are declining and the moral authority of headmen has now largely been transferred to mallams. Cattle *Fulbe* are increasingly being visited by itinerant Qur’anic teachers and curers, whereas in market towns they invariably associate with more devout Muslims (quoted in R. Nelson 1997:87).

**The Worldview of the Pastoral Fulbe**

Veltkamp, in her paper “An Exploration of World View and World View Change among the Fulani” (1983), analyzes the worldview of nomadic *Fulbe* in terms of their central allegiances. The first major allegiance is “cattle and pastoralism.” It is the concern for the welfare of the cattle that causes the *Fulbe* to become nomads.

The second major allegiance is “independence and individualism,” which is again a result of their allegiance to their cattle. To cater to the needs of his cattle, each herder must be free to move wherever pasture and water may be found and to move his cattle away from other herds infected with disease. This does not mean that each herder can survive in the bush without social relationships. He is part of many social networks--brothers, father’s brothers and kin, mother and her kin, marriage relationships, and age mates--but what characterizes all these social relationships is that they are flexible, fluid, and open-ended, so that the nomadic *Fulbe* may retain their individual freedom. The third major allegiance of the nomadic *Fulbe* is “Fulani way,” the code of conduct, which upholds a certain level of social cohesion by restraining individualistic behavioral indulgence.

In Veltkamp’s analysis of the worldview of nomadic *Fulbe*, Islam seems to have a very limited place. To the urgent question, “has Islam changed the world view of the