

THE TRADITIONAL MODE OF DRESSING OF THE FULANI IN YOLA, ADAMAWA STATE

Usman Mohammed
Principal Ethnographer
National Museum, Yola

Introduction

The Fulani otherwise known as "*Fulbe*" people of Yola are the largest nomadic group in Yola, Adamawa State and indeed the West African Sub-Region. The origins of the Fulani are highly disputed. Some believed that they are of North Africa origin, reaching Nigeria about the 10th Century. Characterized by their lighter skin and straight hair, some Africans refer to them as "*white people*". However, recent studies show that they descended from nomads both in North Africa and Sub-Sahara Africa. The Fulani people were the first group of people in West Africa to have accepted Islamic conversion through Jihads that took place between 1250 and 1900. They took over much of West Africa and established themselves not only as a religious group but also as a political and economic force which was the doctrine that was adopted by His Royal Highness, Modibo Adama of blessed memory, which remains the most powerful emirate in Adamawa state. The Fulani have a code of behaviour called "*PULAAKU*" which involves important virtues such as "*MUNYAL*" is patience, self-control, mental discipline and respect for others. There is also "*HAKILLE*" which entails wisdom in managing his affairs. "*TINAADE*" means hard work and courage in the Fulani dialect and culture.

Before the emergence of Islam and Christianity, the Fulani traditional mode of dressing was purely native, and it typified all the norms and values embedded in their entire socio-cultural life. Generally, dressing, as sampled from various responses of informants is a vital aspect of life of the Fulani in Yola. "*LIMSHE*" means dress in Fulani dialect. Their style of dressing is different from other people. Majority of Muslims' Fulbe dressing is synonymous with Islamic virtues. They maintain the "*Pulaku*" (shyness tendencies), a Fulani word which constitutes the basis of their culture. Traditional attires of the Fulani are often used for ethnic and religious purposes. Dressing to the Fulani literally goes beyond the fashion for men and women. It unites and brings them together by giving them identity, respect, values and dignity, which distinguish the Fulani race from other people.

The materials used for the styles for men and women, and also the traditional accessories such as beads, bracelets, and caps combine to form the Fulani native dress. The traditional dressing of Fulani is produced through a

process called "SANJYUGO" meaning weaving. The materials used are "Hottollo" (cotton), "Garaji" (thread), "Sanjyurgal" (weaving calabash), and "Mottirgal" (weaving stick).



Materials used for weaving of Fulani Traditional Attires

The cotton is being rolled into thread by spreading the cotton in a straight line attached to the weaving stick and the stick rolls on the weaving calabash to form thread of ropes around the stick. This process is repeated continuously for two to three days for large bunch of threads which will be later weaved into cloth called "Limshe". An elderly informant also said that to be properly dressed meant weaving the right dress for the right occasion and the right person and the right place. The said dressing should be synonymous with the accepted mode of behaviour of members of the society.

The Fulani women wear the "Mudakare", a sleeveless half-top worn over the wrapper. The "Mudakare" is worn with the accompanying beads and bracelets on their hands, heads, and waist of the women, as can be seen below.



Complete Fulani Female Traditional Attire (Wrapper and Sleeveless top) Fulani Women Dressing Accessories (Head band, wrist band and a mirror purse)

The amulets otherwise called "Lohol" by the Fulani, beautify the attire and also serve as protection of against human nakedness. The Fulani women wear on their heads long straight beads that are usually decorated with cowries and silver coins. They also love to wear beads around their waist and bracelets on their hands and jewellery on their heads, noses, ears and waist.



Fulani Male Dressing Accessories



Fulani Male Trousers with Sleeveless Short and Conical Cap



Fulani Popular Cap Made From Raffia with Red Coloured Skin Decoration (malfare)

In ceremonial gatherings such as turbaning, naming ceremonies, marriage ceremony, funeral ceremonies, Juma'at Prayers and festivals, the Fulani men wear "Garewol" top-gown together with "Jumpawol", which is a small under-gown. They as well put on a pair of trousers called "Saira" and a cap called "Hufnere". The women on their part tie wrappers with a blouse top, head-tie and veil to cover their bodies. They also beautify themselves with necklaces, chains, earrings and bangles on their neck, hands and ears respectively. For the royal members, they wear an under-gown inner shirt with a big-gown on top. Then, the "Alkibbare" (Royal Gown) is worn on top and the head is turbanned with "Metalewol" (royal head-tie). Also worn are the traditional royal shoes called "Pade" with a sword (*Kapali*), which is tied on the waist and the "Sauru Lamu" (staff of office) which the noble person holds as a symbol of authority over all others in the emirate or chiefdom.

Fatima M. M. (2010) affirms that the difference between the Fulani and other African people is that the Fulani people have respect for beauty of both male and female because it is considered important. One of the ways beauty is shown is through tattoos that are designed all over the body. A distinguishing feature of a Fulani woman is her black lips which are tattooed with needle and coal. she uses "Henna" or "Lalleh" to decorate the hands and feet, which is either brownish or reddish colour.



Fulani Women in their dressing attire

Impact of Modernization on Fulani Traditional Dressing

The Fulani traditional mode dressing has been influenced to a certain degree by some external forces. Over the years, the Fulani dressing virtues have lost its appeal and attraction among the people especially among the educated elites who mostly reside in the cities. This impact is from religion particularly Christianity and Islam. Religion and Western culture brought about changes that tampered with the Fulani traditional dressing style.

Beside the facts in the existing literature, the analysis of data collected regarding the impact of modern dressing on traditional dressing clearly showed that the infiltration of Western culture contributed in no small measure to the gradual fading away of the Fulani traditional dressing. Perhaps, in future, the dress culture of the Fulani people may pass into oblivion due to the incessant effects of both the West and foreign religions. If not checked, the traditional Fulani dressing and the values attached to its uniqueness will continue to decline at a very fast rate. It is only the Fulani people in the bush called "*Bororo*" that currently practice traditional mode of dressing.

Continuity in the Use of Native Attire among the Fulani in Yola

The world considers our children as the most important group of our societies, who must be taken care of during childhood. What children learn at childhood stage is considered the cornerstone for them, as children of the present are hope of the future. The child is an active learner with many fantasies and curious questions. Therefore, they must be guided and educated to have knowledge about the society and its heritage (Al-Shehri A. and Dabbagh M., 2021). We must preserve our heritage and transfer it to our children for them to get acquainted with it and become familiar with its importance and beauty.

An exploratory study was made to measure the girls' knowledge of traditional costumes and the impact of globalization on our children's understanding of cultural costumes. The results revealed that children are not aware of their traditional costumes. Hence, the necessity of introducing our children to the traditional costumes from their early childhood stage to late childhood.

It is worthwhile to note that despite all odds resulting from the impacts of religions and Westernization, the Fulani people have maintained some crucial aspects of their traditional attires in the following areas:

- During festivals and ceremonies, the Fulani people of Yola, demonstrate and display their traditional dress.

- The Fulani Royalty is always backed by their royal dress code anytime and anywhere they are found.
- During war and hunting expedition, the Fulani men dress in their attire that is peculiar to them.
- Hairdo and body tattoo, which are aspects of dressing among the Fulani people, are still being practised.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing findings, the researcher recommends the following:

- The moral values portrayed by the Fulani traditional dressing should be embraced among the Fulani people.
- The dress culture of Fulani people should not be allowed to go into extinction as a result of foreign culture.
- As a cultural heritage that unites and brings social bonding among the Fulani people and other ethnic groups, the Fulani traditional dressing should not be regarded as a fetish traditional practice.
- The rites performed during festivals and ceremonies with the use of traditional attires should be preserved.
- The mass media should engage in programmes that focus on traditional costumes in order to enhance children's knowledge of their culture.
- Government and non-governmental organizations should give financial assistance to enhance the production and sales of Fulani native attires.

Conclusion

This research work focussed on the Fulani traditional mode of dressing of Yola in Adamawa State. It outlined the Fulani traditional dressing pattern, the changes that occurred, the influence of modern dressing on the Fulani native dressing pattern. Findings showed that it is imperative to revive the Fulani traditional dressing, which has helped in the preservation of cultural values and identity.

References

- Al-Shehri, A. and Dabbagh, M. (2021). "Effectiveness of Incorporating Traditional Costumes into Educational Curriculum to Enhance Students Awareness". *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 9, Issue 6.
- Fatima, M. M. (2010). National Institute for Cultural Orientation, *Newsletters* Vol. 6.
- Rishmond, V. P; McCroskey, J. C & Mark (2019). "Human Communication

Theory and Research Traditions and Models", in *Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research*, Routledge

The World Book Encyclopedia, (2001). Vol. 7 First Publication (Page 553-554).

www.whiteriverdesign.com, (2019). The Meaning of Colour in Culture.

www.eu.m.wikipedia.org; (2019). Colour of Clothing.

List of Informants

S/N	NAME	AGE	OCCUPATION	DATE OF INTERVIEW	PLACE OF INTERVIEW
1	Alhaji Ibrahim Idris	69	Retired Civil Servant	4 th Jan. 2022	Yola
2	Muhammed Attahiru	62	Farmer	5 th Jan. 2022	Gurin
3	Mal. Sa'adu Iya	65	Retired Journalist	2 nd Jan. 2022	Yola
4	Alhaji Mustapha Isa	76	District Head of Namatri	8 th Jan. 2022	Namtari Palace.
5	Haji. Rab Mamman	60	Housewife	11 th Jan. 2022	Yola
6	Mal. Musa Garba	67	Trader	14 th Jan. 2022	Yola
7	Mr. Audu Ali	56	HOD Department of History, CSS Yola.	10 th Jan. 2022	Yola