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Gender in Fulani Proverbs
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Abstract

Proverbs are an integral part of Fulani culture, passed on from generation to generation for centuries, they are still in wide use today and are very much part of everyday speech.

Pre-Islamic Fulani women were largely dedicated to storytelling activities. It was their domain. Every night, within the confines of their homes, or under the dark sky, they re-told age-old stories. They encapsulated the people's history and philosophy of life. This was more so because the people could not read and write. Their history and beliefs were stored and coded in some special people's mental capacities. They are then transmitted orally within various literary genres, proverbs inclusive.

The cultural heritage, ethics, mores, beliefs, traditions and wisdom of the Fulani are all embedded in their proverbs. The attainment of Islam as a state religion did not in any significant way diminish the status of proverbs among Fulani people. Islam only changed the general animistic belief system found in proverbs by shifting the focus to Allah. The laws governing inter-personal relationships as found in proverbs remained the same. Islam confirmed, to a large extent, the virtues of equity and fairness needed in one's dealings with others, as taught in Fulani proverbs. Islam broadened the horizons of Fulani proverbs by making use of them as titles of books, newspaper headings and articles, and in works of fiction. The highly moralistic works of fiction by Muslim authors, writers, and poets relied heavily on the adoption of proverbs for easier transmission.

Fulani gender proverbs, though relatively few in number compared to those of the Hausa and Igbo, reflect the hierarchical position of women, and the attitudes and beliefs that shape their existence. The paper will examine a few some proverbs on gender showing the position of women in the Fulani society.

Keywords: Fulfulde, Gender, Proverbs