

3.

THE MILKMAID IN PERSPECTIVE: A FORMAL ANALYSIS OF SELECTED FULANI MAIDEN INSPIRED ART WORKS**NWABUOKU Kennette Dikens (PhD)**

Department of Fine and Applied Arts

Faculty of Environmental Sciences

University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.

kennette.nwabuoku@uniben.edu

Introduction

The Fulani who are a stock of the North are specifically referred to as pastoralists or nomads due to their constant migrating lifestyles. In the process of this constant mobility, their numerous flocks usually encroach on and destroy farmlands and products, which always cause fierce conflicts between them and the various communities they happen to settle in at that point in time. Despite the negative tendencies that oftentimes trail their movement, however, the nomadic Fulani also possess some very salient characteristics, with particular reference to the popular visual representations of the Milkmaid otherwise referred to as *Mai Nono*. On this premise therefore, this paper is presented as publicity as well as a sensitization campaign to showcase the overly downplayed or outright overlooked positive side of the nomadic Fulani, with emphasis on the Milkmaid, as a design catalyst for artistic development and cultural sustainability. In the course of this paper, the generic terms Milkmaid and *Mai Nono* will be used interchangeably.

A Brief on the Fulani and Nomadism

Artmore (1979: 56) postulates that “the Fulani provided one of the very few examples in Africa of the mixing of two races as distinct from ethnic or tribal groups”. Artmore, further states that the “Fulani are descendants from the Negro tribal group of Tukolor, reasoning that they are the descents from “Caucasoid Berbers who mingled with the Tukolor when they moved south of the Sahara”. He goes on to suggest that: “the Tukolor linguistically may have been related to the Serer and Wolof people”. Saine (2012:11) explains that the Serer and Wolof people are a West African ethnological group partly Senegal and partly Gambia. Artmore concludes by claiming that their present name (Tukolor) was a corruption of the English word “Two Colours”. de St. Croix (1945) revealed that the Fulani originated from the Arabian Peninsula, and migrated south-ward to Senegambia. From Senegambia, they moved east-ward, crossing several Sahelian and Sudanian zones, to the Red Sea.

Nomadism as practiced by the Fulani pastoralists is a human activity which has been in existence from time immemorial. History relays to us that long before man began to settle down or to even dream of building communities, that the early man was primarily nomadic in lifestyle. This nomadic culture, which the Fulani group still practices, though ancient, is very much in practice in many parts of the world today. Such lifestyle is rather exclusive and does not permit intrusion from other cultural backgrounds. This account is in tandem with the statement by Meek (1925: 96), that: “the Fulani have maintained a remarkable national solidarity and race exclusiveness...” Little wonder why the nomadic Fulani seldom practice inter-tribal affinities such as marriages. As synonymous with itinerant populations globally, the nomadic Fulani in general and the *Mai Nono* in particular have over the decades maintained a peculiar characteristic and uniqueness as a people, due mostly to their non-conformist approach to surrounding cultures and customs. Their lifestyle has as a result, remained unadulterated by surrounding cultures in spite of their constant mobility.

Response to Social Change

Contemporarily, the world is now viewed as a global village. As a result of this, the youth and the elderly from every walk of life are trying every possible means to adapt to the constantly evolving scenes of the present high-paced age. All of these happen because of their quest to be inclusive in world trends. Conversely, the nomadic Fulani to which the *Mai Nono* belongs are seemingly undaunted and have not bothered much in pursuing nor applying modern tendencies to their lifestyles, due to the fact that their cultural and traditional values remain of great importance to them. This verity about the nomadic Fulani's seeming lack of interest in the craze typical of the present age, has however, presented dual consequences.

Positive Consequence

The Nomadic Fulani have positively maintained the purity of their traditional values as it has remained untainted and unadulterated, despite their wide range of travelling. They have not become enslaved to modern fashion nor have they been influenced by what is in vogue unlike their sedentary neighbours. As a result of their cultural purity, the nomadic Fulani have to a considerable extent preserved their cultural heritage and peculiar identity. Life on the move has also minimized significantly, the risk of cultural or moral pollution through contact with non-nomads. Stenning (1965) lends voice to this assertion as he observes that, "In order to keep their race pure, unadulterated and unpolluted, marriages are contracted usually between close kin, and by this means, an agnatic lineage group is believed to conserve its normal purity and indeed, to prevent its own dissolution." This concept of first-cousin marriage may be traditional rather than religious, for it may not have an Islamic or even Christian backing. Brain's (1980: 15), view is that "For the Fulani, the important things are purity of race, the training of their cowherd, preservation of their language and traditions, their ceremonial patterns, and above all, the cattle".

Negative Consequences

On the negative side, is to be noted the implication of the statement by the sage and Babylonian mentor, Clason (1926: 41): "...therefore, I urge all men to be in the front ranks of progress and not to stand still, lest they be left behind..." This statement hitherto, describes the nomadic Fulani, who, refusing to move with evolving scenes of life, and tenaciously holding on to their cultural values, as well as refusal to mingle with the surrounding cultures, have been grossly short-changed or neglected by several successive governments, policy formulation and implementation. As a result, they lacked access to some modern amenities. In fact, in terms of civilization, (not until quite recently, with the creation of agencies, such as the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE), The Pastoral Resolve (PARE) and other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), such as Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), and their numerous facilities geared towards uplifting the nomadic Fulani race), they had no direct access to education, hospitals, bank loans/services and a host of other modern amenities as enjoyed by the sedentary populations.

In this regard, Ezeomah (1987) observes that: "the pastoral nomads have not benefitted significantly from the massive educational expansion in Nigeria. The migrant groups are thus undoubtedly among the most educationally disadvantaged groups in Nigeria". This is a profound statement from a scholar, who is an authority in the area of the nomadic Fulani populace. Still on the issue of the Nomadic Fulani educational disadvantage, Ezeomah (2002: 6) notes that:

Their (nomadic Fulani) abysmally low level of education in formal and non-formal education was largely due to the following constraints: the nomad's lifestyle of constant migration in search of water and pasture...the irrelevance of the formal school curriculum vis-à-vis their needs, interests and problems, the centrality of "child

labour” in their production system in which it is extremely difficult for children to attend formal schools regularly.

In the same vein, Agwu (1998: 17) observes that “certain groups had out of omission or commission, been left out of the country’s educational provision, in fact, until very recently there are no concrete provisions for Nigerian nomads.” Excerpt from the introductory notes on the information Brochure of the National Commission for Nomadic Education, published in 2002, reads thus:

...the pastoral nomads have not benefited significantly from the massive educational expansion of the 70s and 80s in Nigeria. The migrant groups are thus undoubtedly among the most educationally disadvantaged groups in Nigeria. Indeed literacy rates among the pastoral nomads....even before the inception of the National Commission for Nomadic Education in 1990, stood at 0.02%.

Purpose of this Study

The objectives of this study include shedding light on the following identified areas on the nomadic Fulani.

- I. Ascertaining to what extent the nomad Fulani have held true to their cultural/traditional values.
- II. Examine the possible reasons why they have succeeded in maintaining their race exclusiveness.
- III. Demystify the nomadic Fulani in terms of their past and conservativeness despite social change.
- IV. Showcase and determine the extent of influence and coverage by contemporary Nigerian artists of the nomadic Milkmaid entity as represented in numerous artistic media.

Selective Reportage

Headline news on various electronic media such as television, radio, newspapers and even on the social media platforms abound on clashes resulting in the maiming, killings and sacking of entire farming communities by nomadic Fulani herdsman, but hardly does one hear about the positive contributions of the nomadic Fulani to national development.

Ikpeama (2002: 16), reports a clash between Fulani nomads and some farming communities as indicative of such incidences. According to her, a Fulani herdsman had a squabble with a farmer, which resulted in the death of the farmer. She further reported that this culminated in the killing of nine Fulani, about 150 cattle, destruction of property and massive dislocation of Fulani nomads to neighbouring states. In proffering solution to this ugly trend, she attributed the incessant clashes with host communities to letting loose of animals by the Fulani into people’s farmlands and farming on cattle grazing routes. She however, called on the government to give clear demarcation of grazing routes and the creation of grazing reserves for the nomads. These she said would bring an end to clashes between pastoralists and their sedentary neighbours.

The Nomadic Fulani Contributions to National Economy

As aforementioned, the system of selective reportage on the nomadic Fulani, which seems to be silent on their numerous positive contributions to Nigeria’s economic growth, while maliciously laying emphases on the negative theories trailing them is not healthy. In response to the need for sensitization, this study hence makes reference to the following facts as reported by several authorities and sources.

In spite of their numerous contributions to the growth of agriculture in Nigeria, little is known or understood about the persona of the nomad. It is important to note that more than 90% of beef in Nigeria is supplied by the pastoral Fulani alone. Ezeomah (1987: 2) asserts that: “often times, we do not appreciate that they (the Fulani) not only give employment to about 12 million of our citizens, but also sustain such agro based industries as meat, dairy, shoe (leather) factories, among several others most of which without them, life would be more problematic”. Ezeomah (1987: 63) further adds that, “High quality livestock is important for the production of quality protein which comes from milk and meat. Of the estimated population of cattle in Nigeria, 96% of them are owned by the nomadic Fulani. They are also the major contributors of fresh milk, butter, hides and skin etc.” Ezeomah (op. cit.) concludes by noting that, “the dung passed from the cattle is a great source of manure for the farmers also”.

Meek (1925), also points out that, “The presence of their cattle is generally welcomed by the local inhabitants, who thereby obtain supplies of butter and milk, as well as manure for their fields. The flesh of cattle that have died is also an acceptable addition to the diet of pagan villagers.”

Acuity of the Milkmaid

It would be assumed that due to her seeming “refusal to embark on the train of change” the nomadic Milk Maid as a consequence, lacks representation in government as opposed to her settled counterparts in other ethnicities across Nigeria. Also, due to her peculiar lifestyle, she is neither in politics nor is she educationally or financially mobilized thereby having no voice and so she is not always put into consideration when policies are being formulated and even if considered, she scarcely gets a fair deal. Besides, due to her constantly mobile lifestyle, as entrenched by her characteristic occupation, the Milkmaid and her male counterpart, the Herdsman, may have no land holding rights. It is most probably in response to this anomaly, that the present administration in Nigeria is vigorously pursuing the issue of cattle colonies as a means of facilitating the legacy of the migrant folk.

Unique Features of the Milkmaid

The nomadic Milkmaid is a spectacle to behold. Stenning (1959), describes her thus: “(mostly), light-skinned with curly hair, she has pointed nose, thin lips, and slender stature”. In his own account, Latchen, (1970), describing the Mai Nono’s physical features, explains that her blood may be “more Arab than Negro...” This latter submission by Latchen (ibid.) comes to mind when one critically examines the appearance of the pastoral Milkmaid, who is generally light skinned, of slender built, elongated and pointed nose, long and curly hair. Accordingly, Brain, (1980), seems to agree with both Stenning and Latchen as he asks the question: “...why the pastoral Fulani looked so different from other Africans?” The beauty and elegance of the pastoral Milkmaid, to a very large degree owes to her slim and often agile physique, which is not deliberate but natural. The virtue of her always being on-the-move life style, does not allow for indulgence in laxities that could lead to bloatedness, hence, her slim figure and the other aforementioned features all add up to her being the choice for several artistic expressions. Presently most of the nomadic Milkmaids as can be observed have become darkened in complexion, having lost their luminance. Indisputably, this could be due to their constant exposure to harsh weather conditions as a result of climatic change. This happens as they weather the storm and move about with cattle in search of pasture and milk distribution.

The Milkmaid’s unique dress pattern, elaborate hair make up, lavish jewellery and ornamental costumes have been an integral part of the pastoral cultural heritage. The cultivation of physical

beauty is a characteristic of Fulani culture. This is so because, by merely observing the Fulani Milkmaid, one can see art, colour, beauty and elegance vividly displayed. It is their belief that God endowed them with the greatest beauty on the face of the earth; they therefore, do all that is within their means to preserve and exhibit this “God given heritage”. A major part of this art is in their tattooing or colouring of their skins and their elaborate accessories and make-up. To a very large extent part of their arts also serve as charms.

The Milkmaid and her Calabash

While the nomadic Fulani Herdsman is rarely sighted without his staff and cattle, the Milkmaid on the other hand is hardly seen without her calabash or calabashes. The Mai Nono is known for her highly ornamented and decorated calabash which is the preferred container for milk collection, preservation, transportation and dispensation.

The following statement is credited to Berns and Hudson (1986: 48):

While bowls cut from globular gourds predominate in daily use, the three other varieties of gourds – the bottle-shaped, flattened and tubular-also have a number of specialized applications. Calabash spoons cut from bottle gourds make handy ladles for serving soup or utensils for drinking the sweet thin porridge that is often shared out of one large serving bowl. Bottle shaped gourds are used not only as flasks for liquids, but also to hold various medicines and cosmetics. Smaller (uncut) ones are filled with pebbles and used as babies’ or dance rattles. They are also used for holding seeds...

Hawking is a national phenomenon; it is a trade means that cut across every ethnic region of Nigeria and most of the African continent; but while basin, carton, tray, basket, head-pan and possibly, wheel-barrow may be used by other ethnic groups, in the eastern, central and southern parts particularly, the calabash is the preferred choice for the nomadic Fulani. In the dispensing of fresh milk, for instance, the milk is conveyed in a large calabash, another is used for its covering. The spoon for dishing it is a ladle and the consumers’ plates are all products of the gourd plant which the calabashes of all sizes and functions are made from.

The calabash is also employed for other domestic uses in the nomadic Fulani homestead. It is used for water storage, as bowls for other purposes, as a bead, trinket or jewellery box of sort. Well carved and hand painted calabashes are priced gift items, which are parts of ceremonies. In the event of a marriage, the bride’s matrimonial possessions are incomplete without a couple of calabashes. During annual lineage meetings, married women bring their racks to a public area to display their calabashes formally. To amass an impressive collection, a woman must sell many gallons of milk and spend many hours adorning or arranging the gourds. Large calabashes also serve in place of boxes for clothing. To add credence to this assertion, Stenning (1959), summarizes their household possession in this way: “Household utensils consist mainly of receptacles for milk for which calabashes of many different shapes and sizes are bought in the market and decorated by the women”.

Again, calabash, which in Fulfulde, is called “Kwariya”, loosely translated as “container” is another avenue for art for the Fulani; accordingly, Fisher (1984: 148) notes that, “They (the calabashes) are decorated with incised designs, mirrors, coins, thumb tacks, spoons and other ornaments of individual choice which not only indicate the owner’s prosperity and lineage but also provide an outlet for artistic talents.”

Visona (2001: 44), further reports that:

In addition to valuing collections of calabashes as personal treasuries, pastoral Fulani women use calabashes for personal adornment. Calabashes filled with milk are carried to the market on the heads of these graceful women, who believe that well-arranged images on calabashes both attract clients and accentuate their own slender beauty.

Visona (ibid.) went on to assert that: “designs appearing on a woman’s skin are also burned, impressed or carved into the calabashes she owns”.

These gourds, whose rinds have been scrapped, dried and prepared for use as containers, are used by the many peoples of Africa. However, they are the focus of especially elaborate aesthetic attraction among the Fulani. Beautifully ornamented gourds embellish a household and are adorned and displayed primarily by women. Nwabuoku, (2010: 52) states that:

The gourd from which the calabash is derived is not exclusive to the Fulani alone. What is however quite distinguishing is the fact that a calabash is merely a domestic utensil in the hand of a Yoruba woman, and a wine container in the hand of an Igbo palm wine tapper. To the Fulani it is not just a mere container or utensil, but a great possession and an indispensable companion, hence the need to beautify it as well as give it character. Thus, calabashes in the Fulani context go beyond mere domestic use to both art as well as fashion.

Milkmaid: Fashion and Style

The dress sense of the nomadic Milkmaid is very unique and peculiar. She is greatly inclined to very loud colours as can be noticed from her multiple coloured, layered apparel. It is not surprising therefore, why her lifestyle, fashion and personality have continued to greatly inspire contemporary Nigerian artists. The Milkmaid naturally has long curly hair, which she further loves adorning with long attachments and woolly-extensions to which she applies brilliant coloured materials for enhancement (Plate 3). The following statement by Jefferson (1994: 8), lends credence to this assertion: “Man’s inclination to decorate objects is deep-rooted and universal. Since prehistoric times, he has embellished a wide variety of his possessions – from his weapons and the walls of his shelter to clothing and even his own body.”

It has been observed that “during the first part of the twentieth century, Fulani women could be easily distinguished from women of other groups in the Futa Djallon by their distinctive hairstyles”. Visona (2001: 44) notes that:

Kaleidoscopic in range and beauty, African dress embraces not only clothing and jewellery but also coiffure, scarification, and body painting. Like speech, dress is a primary civilizing phenomenon, a means of symbolic communication. Operating in a matrix of cultural codes and personal preferences, it conveys to inform onlookers a culturally constructed self or identity.

It has equally been noted that generally, African dress codes depend largely on the culture’s way of life. It has been further observed that the Mai Nono, as part of reducing the bulk of her personal luggage, resorts to wearing most of her personal effects almost always and for very long periods. The daily dress of the Milkmaid therefore, may include heavy gold, silver, bronze and beaded earrings as well as a rich collection of assorted jewellery. This is not necessary for a sedentary or

settled woman as she has a home to live and return to and besides, her settled life pattern permits her time and ease to attend social and organized functions. The *Mai Nono* has a unique dress code which tends to accentuate her slim physique and help maintain her typical outlook. This could also be aligned to her constantly on-the-move lifestyle, which demand light dresses in her quest to shelve excess luggage. Her blouse is usually small and body-fitting and usually due to her slim feature, she usually has a firm and sizeable bust which allows her to move with or without brassieres, an aspect of her fashion sense that artists have laid undue emphases on. In most cases, her blouse is so tightly fitted that parts of her body, her breasts and lower abdomen are left exposed. This is worn over a tightly tied one-piece wrapper. She favours shiny objects or ornaments as part of her attire, these ornaments include: colourful beads and buttons, copper coins, multi-coloured wool, coloured rings and bangles of varying sizes, shapes and texture. She wears rings, bracelets and beads on her neck, arms, wrists, ankles, waist, fingers, ears and nostril.

According to de Negri (1976), the nomadic Milkmaids:

Use face marks and plenty tattooing. They decorate and paint their bodies, fashion their hair into attractive shapes. Fulani girls have elaborately arranged styles with plaits and bunch. In order to achieve this, long plaits of false-hair hang down very long and are decorated with bits of metal and beads. To attract attention to themselves, the pastoral Fulani girls wear brightly coloured clothes when they come to local markets to sell their produce. They do this because they attach so much importance to their external look.

Milkmaid: Succour Provider

The Milk Maid's romance with the calabash is not merely for identification purposes alone, but also for sustaining lives. Milking of cows, preparation, production, preservation as well as sale of fresh milk are some of the basic daily routines of the Milkmaid. As the family moves and the burden of the journey and harsh weather conditions begin to take its toll on them, the *Mai Nono* becomes the ever ready and ever present source of energy sustenance for the entire train. However, if for any reason, they settle in a location for a few days as the need arises, the services of the Milkmaid is then extended to the vicinity for as many as are willing to patronize her.

Mai Nono: Influence on the Arts and the Artist

As earlier stated, the Fulani Milkmaid has become several artists' delight. She has repeatedly been a theme in almost all art exhibitions across the length and breadth of the country, irrespective of region. She has been rendered in almost all conceivable media, especially in sculpture and painting. She has been used for promotional posters and campaigns, billboards, magazine and book covers, calendars and almanacs. The Milkmaids are the icons depicted on the reverse side of the Nigerian ten naira note (₦10). Also, the nomadic Fulani Milkmaid due to her beliefs disregards sculptural elements (images). But due to her great quest to express her art forms, resorts to other means. Sculpture is therefore translated as well as expressed through her hair styles. Brain (1980) states that, "the elaborate hairstyles of both men and women in many ways replace the clay and wood sculptures of other African peoples". Consequently, as she expresses sculpture in her hairstyle, so also she expresses painting on her face and body in the forms of make-up and tattoos – truly, the Fulani Milkmaid is "Art Personified".

A Formal Analysis of Some Selected Milkmaid Inspired Works by Contemporary Nigerian Artists.

As has been elaborated in the preceding discourse, the nomadic Milkmaid has significantly influenced contemporary Nigerian artists, who have explored and exploited several media in their quest to replicate the Mai Nono. The person of the Milkmaid has been expressed in various media and fields of specialty. These include painting, sculpture, textiles, photography, architecture and so on. Based on this fact, some works expressed in various materials depicting the Milkmaid are hereby formally analysed.

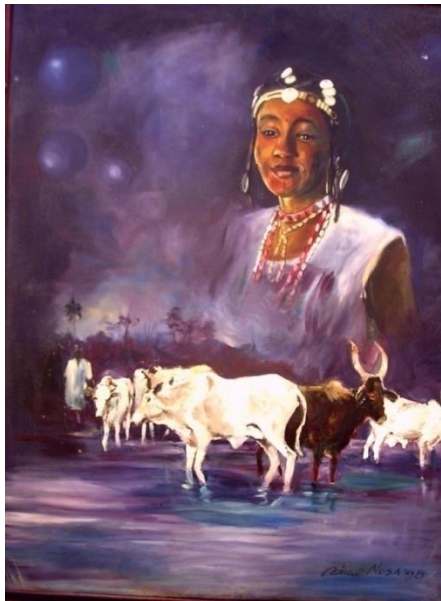


Plate 1

Artist: Nosa Ogiugo, Title: Fulani Maid, Size: 48' x 60', Year: 1998

Medium: Oil on Canvas, Photo Credit: Rakiya Sani

Nosa Ogiugo's piece titled "Fulani Maid" is rendered in oil on canvas. The maid is depicted in a relaxed mood with the terrain well captured; her attire, elaborate jewellery, facial make-up and hair are aptly replicated. One major omission however, is observable: the conspicuous absence of a decorated calabash. This could be termed a very major error or omission, because the calabash and the Mai Nono are supposedly "inseparable". Fisher (1984: 144) notes that, "They (the calabashes) are decorated with incised designs, mirrors, coins, thumb tacks, spoons and other ornaments of individual choice which not only indicate the owner's prosperity and lineage but also provide an outlet for artistic talents."

Having ascertained the importance of the calabash to the Milkmaid, it therefore seems an imperative item to be so omitted in such a painting visually denoting a special breed of people. The issue of contrast was also captured, as the artist creatively placed the cows which are predominantly white as well as the Milkmaid's attire against a backdrop of deep bluish-purple, suggestive also of the artist's good and broad knowledge and mastery of colour placement and distribution. Furthermore, the artist's depiction of the Milkmaid as a towering figure over and above the entire flock and landscape reflect the importance and centrality of the Mai Nono in the Fulani cultural setting.

In the final analysis, the artist infused three spherical bubble-like balls of varying diameters in the atmosphere to the top left of the painting. What could these three bubbles mean or be referring to? It is an observable fact that everything included in any work of art has a meaning or a story behind it. Could the artist sublimely be indicating the triad nomadic Fulani elements of “Pulaaku”, which is their triple virtues of bonafide Nomadism, which translates into: Honesty, Hard work and Fearlessness? If this be the case then, the artist having effectively captured this vital aspect of the Fulani culture could be forgiven his other critical omission of the calabash.

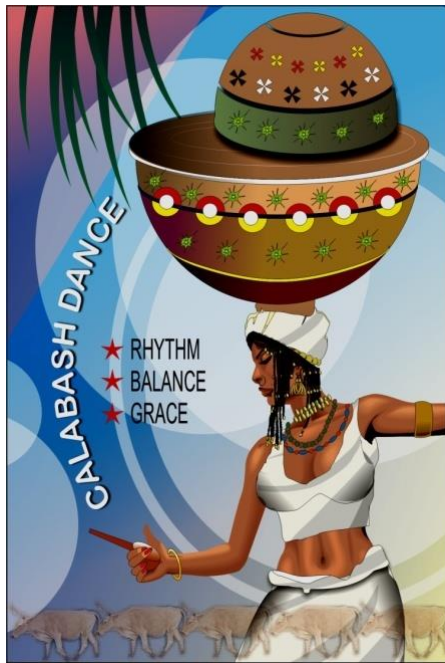


Plate 2

Artist: Nwabuoku Kennette Dickens, Title: Calabash Dance, Size: 24" x 36", Year: 2009, Medium: Graphic Poster, Photo Credit: De-Zeal Ken-Dikens N.

This poster depicts an even toned slender Fulani damsel exhibiting her wares in an elaborately decorated calabash positioned on her head without any external support. Her position suggests a rhythmical prance, as if beckoning on buyers. This poster in all ramifications celebrates the dexterity with which the Fulani maiden exhibits her wares. Her exceptional skill of positioning her well decorated calabash of fresh milk on her head with little or no support, despite her stance, coupled with the three words: Rhythm, Balance and Grace, insinuating the dance strides of the milk maid.

In this graphic poster, the creator's use of vibrant colours and cyclical shapes for the background is reminiscent of the *Mai Nono* who is almost ubiquitous across the length and breadth of the country in tandem with Meek (1925: 115), who agrees that "the nomadic Fulani, of whom the *Abore* or *Bororo* are the most typical, follow the grass – they may be here today and gone tomorrow". In the same vein, Ezeomah (1987: 12) indicates that:

One of the main reasons for their constant movement, even at very short notice, is the avoidance of animal disease infested areas. Further reasons for the seasonal movements of the nomadic *Fulbe* has been motivated by many factors some of which are their desire for independence and freedom from interference and supervision by

sedentary authorities, freedom from cattle raiding, avoidance of disease infested areas, and as an over-riding factor, the never-ending search for new pastures.

The three words: Rhythm, Balance and Grace, though suggestive of the artist's impression of the persona of the Milkmaid, yet, evokes the spirit of Pulaaku, the trio nomadic virtues of the Fulani race. At the lower edge of the graphic poster, a series of cattle seems to be marching across the picture surface from left to right. This in the artist's opinion suggests that as others depend on the Mai Nono, so does she depend on the cattle for personal survival.



Plate 3

Artist: Nwabuoku Kennette Dickens, **Title:** Art Personified, **Size:** 18" x 24", **Year:** 2009, **Medium:** Pastel on Paper, **Photo Credit:** De-Zeal Ken-Dikens N.

It is an unarguable fact that there is an inherent talent in every human, lying dormant till such a person stirs up the willpower to put it to use. Maxwell (2007) observes that, "you will become on the outside, what you believe on the inside". The Fulani Milkmaid may never have the opportunity either to see or even touch an artist's brush, pallet or paint, but her use of facial make-up as well as body painting and adornment expressly testifies to her great sense of creativity and likeness for all things artistic, hence, she uses her person as a tool for self-expression. In the same vein, Lazzari and Schlesier, (2005) assert that "the body is not depicted in art. It is used in making art or it is transformed to become artwork itself".

This statement justifies the efforts of the Milkmaid in her self-expression as depicted in Plate 3. This painting supports the statement that the Milkmaid is a visual spectacle to behold. The artist captures her use of elaborate jewellery, false hair extensions and facial make-up. The self-confidence of the Milkmaid as exemplified by her outlook is also well articulated in the manner in which the artist renders the Milkmaid's eyes. The clear light and unwavering stare alludes to a person of considerable confidence. In the final analysis, the art piece expresses the unspoken feelings of the unschooled Mai Nono that "Artists are born, not made".

Conclusion

The nomadic Fulani icon otherwise referred to as Mai Nono or Milkmaid has undoubtedly, inspired several visual representations geared towards the documentation of a national identity and

development and so she has immensely contributed her own quota to enriching the country both economically, culturally and visually. In the light of the above, one might therefore ask: “what can or has the Nigerian state done for the nomadic Milkmaid in reciprocity?”

Contribution to Knowledge

This article contributes to the general documentation of the Fulani as a nomadic race and their contributions to the sustainable development of the country through their agro-cultural activities. It also highlights and establishes the aesthetic qualities of the Milkmaid as a viable and continuous source of inspiration for art and artists.

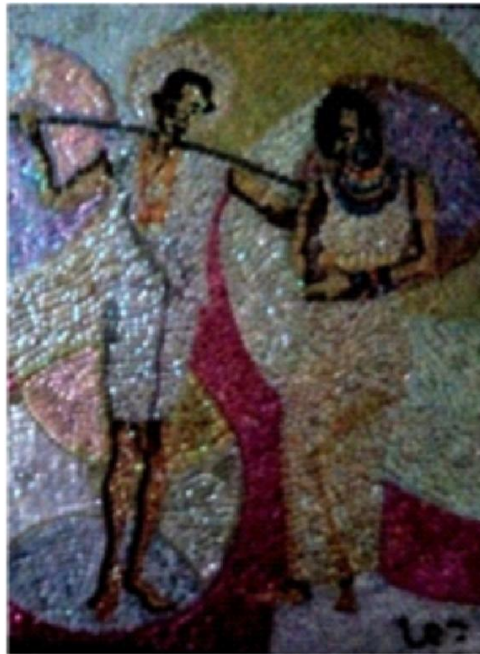
References

- Agwu, S.N. (1998). *Readings on Distant Education for the Pastoral Nomads of Nigeria*. Ahmadu Bello University Press Ltd., Samaru-Zaria, Nigeria.
- Artmore, A. (1979). *Black Kingdom, Black People*. Akure: Fagbingbe Publishers.
- Berns, M.C. and Hudson, B.R. (1986). *The Essential Gourd – Art and History in North-eastern Nigeria*; Museum of Cultural History, University of California, Los Angeles.
- Brain, R. (1980). *Art and Society in Africa*. London and New York: Longman Group.
- Clason, G.S. (1926). *The Richest Man in Babylon*. England; Penguin Putnam Inc.
- de Negri, E. (1976). *Nigerian Body Adornment*, Lagos: Academy Press Ltd.
- de St. Croix (1945) *The Fulani of Northern Nigeria*. London: Gregg International Ltd.
- Ezeomah, C. (1987). *The Settlement Patterns of Nomadic Fulbe in Nigeria*. England: The Bemrose Press, Ltd.
- Fisher, A. (1984). *Africa Adorned*. New York: Harry N. Abrams.
- Ikpeama, F.C. (2002). *Nomadic Education News*. Kaduna. Publication No. 1, Vol. 8, Baraka Press, Kaduna.
- Jefferson, L.E. (1974). *The Decorative Arts of Africa*. Collins St. James Place, London.
- Latchen, C. (1970). *Looking at Nigeria*. London: Adams and Charles Black Inc.
- Lazzari M. and Schlesier D. (2005). *Exploring Art. A Global, Thematic Approach*. Wadsworth, a division of Thomas Learning Inc.
- Maxwell, J. C. (2007). *Talent is Never Enough*. Thomas Nelson Inc. Yates and Yates, LLP, Attorneys and Counsellors', Orange, California.
- Meek, C.K. (1925). *The Northern Tribes of Nigeria*. Vol. 1: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., London, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- National Commission for Nomadic Education, Brochure (2002).
- Nwabuoku, K.D. (2010). *Graphic Advertising of the Nomadic Fulani of Northern Nigeria*. An Unpublished M.F.A. Thesis, submitted to the University of Benin, Benin City.
- Saine, A. (2012). *Culture and Customs of Gambia*. Greenwood, an Imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC, Santa Barbara, California. Denver, Colorado. Oxford, England.
- Stenning, D.J. (1959). *Savanna Nomads*. Oxford University Press, Limited, London.
- Stenning, D. J. (1965). *People of Africa*. New York: Holt, Rinehard and Winston Inc.
- Visona, M.B. (2001). *A History of Africa*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.

APPENDIX: Milkmaid “Mai Nono” Inspired Artworks by Contemporary Nigerian Artists in Diverse Media



Artist: Unknown, Title: Ten Naira Note (₦), Size: 13cm x 7cm, Medium: Mint, Year: 1973
Source: Scanned Image



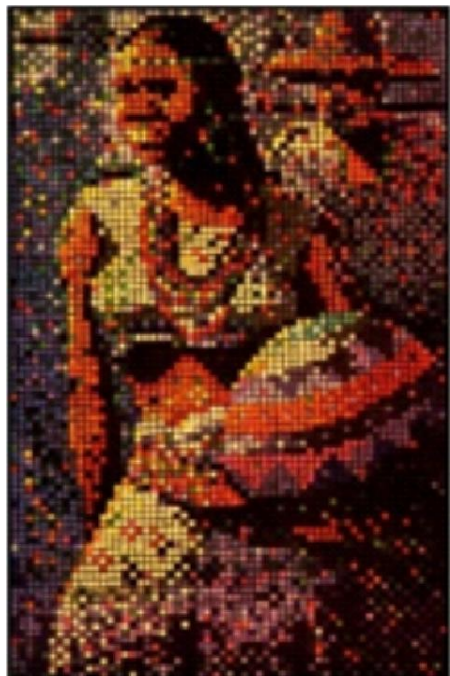
Artist: Lovina E. Onwuakpa, Title: Bride and Groom, Size: 16cm x 20cm, Medium: Sequence on Fabric, Year: 2008, Source: Dr. Lovina E. Onwuakpa



Artist: Kennette Dickens Nwabuoku, Title: Milk Sales, Size: 60cm x 90cm, Medium: Digital Painting, Year: 2008, Source: Pastoral Resolve



Artist: Adewoye Babajide, Title: Fertility, Height: 14 ft, Medium: Sculpture, Year: 1995, Source: De-Zeal Ken Dickens N,



Artist: Sodade Ayoola, Title: The Family, Nations Hope, Size: 76cm x 183cm, Medium: Ceramic Tiles, Year: 2008, Source: The Artist



Artist: Cyril-Egware, P. Isemikon, Title: The Virtuous Woman, Size: 90cm x 100cm, Medium: Textile Fabric, Year: 2010, Source: The Artist



Artist: Kennette Dickens Nwabuoku, Title: Fulbe Model, Size: 60cm x 45cm, Medium: Photography, Year: 2008, Source: The Artist



Artist: Unknown, Title: Mai Nono, Size: 18 ft. x 9ft, Medium: Metal Design, Year: Unknown, Source: Kennette Dickens Nwabuoku



Artist: Nigerian National Troupe, Title: Fulani, Medium: Performing Arts, Year: 2009, Source: Somace



Artist: Gana Kaltume B., Title: Inna (The Mother), Medium: Mixed Media, Size: 58cm x 45cm, Year: 2012, Source: The Artist