

# WIPO



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**WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION**  
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**INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE ON  
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND GENETIC RESOURCES,  
TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND FOLKLORE**

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**WIPO PANEL ON “INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES’  
CONCERNS AND EXPERIENCES IN PROMOTING, SUSTAINING  
AND SAFEGUARDING THEIR TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE,  
TRADITIONAL CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS AND GENETIC  
RESOURCES”**

**EXPERIENCES FROM CAMEROON**

**DECEMBER 7, 2009**

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\* This document comprises the presentation in the form received from the presenter. Any views expressed in the presentation are not necessarily those of WIPO or any of its Member States.

# Traditional Knowledge TK, and Traditional Cultural Expression/Expression of Folklore, TCEs.

The case of the Mbororo-Fulani  
Pastoralists of Cameroon

By Musa Usman Ndamba

## Map of Cameroon and Africa



## Background

- Mbororo-Fulani are a subgroup of the wider Fulani ethnic group.
- They are dispersedly settled across West and Central Africa
- The Mbororo-Fulani pastoralists are an indigenous people who migrated into Cameroon in the late 18 century
- In Cameroon they are found in 8 of the 10 provinces
- They are cattle pastoralists who depend on natural resources for their livelihood

- Cattle rearing constitute the main occupation of the Mbororo-Fulani
- Recently Mbororo-Fulani had evolved from nomadism to semi-nomadism or transhumance
- Mbororo-Fulani are very knowledgeable in ethno-veterinary medicine

- This knowledge is however not promoted because the role they play is not acknowledged



## Some medicinal plants are fast disappearing due to:

- Climate Challenge and population pressure
- The elders are dying without transferring knowledge.
- The young generation are moving to settle in town.
- Lack adequate skill to properly record TK.
- Lack support from National Government.

## Traditional Cultural Expressions (TCEs) and Folklore

- This area comprises three main components:

- Proverbs
- Music
- Ethics



## Proverbs

- Mbororo Fulani expressed their culture sometimes through the use of proverbs that are divided into the following categories:
  - *Common sense* e.g the elephant and the tiger do not go hunting on the same pasture

- *Honesty* e.g the bottom of wealth is sometimes a dirty thing to behold
- *Thoughtfulness* e.g a fowl does not forget where it lays its eggs
- *Generosity* e.g every little tree gives its little bit of shade
- *Humility* e.g a good name is better than gold
- *Good behaviour* e.g when a ripe fruit sees an honest man it drops
- *Consequences* e.g it is the fear of tomorrow that makes the tortoise to carry his house along with him wherever he goes
- *Wisdom and age* e.g if you come to the village of the blind, close an eye until you leave
- *Courage* e.g he who does not look ahead always remain behind
- *Friendship* e.g the eyes can see what they do not want to but the legs will go only to place they want
- *Leadership* e.g what affects the nose must also affects the eyes that must weep for it

## Music

- Music is at times performed by griots, *yoiks*.
- The main instrument are drums (*mbaggu*)
- Content of songs: history, adulthood secrets, praises of important figures and religious preaching



Occasions characterized by singing and dancing are naming ceremonies, weddings, graduations

## Ethics

- Mbororo Fulani Pastoralists have a unique custom and code of conduct. This is expressed through the following:

- Cousinhood (*dendiraaku*)
- Pulaaku



## Cousinhood (*dendiraku*)

- It is a tool to express friendly and fun relationship
- It is used to govern not only the relationships between individuals, but also between communities
- The first level of this concerns particularly the link between the respective descendants of a brother and a sister (cousins).
- The second level concerns certain clans within the Mbororo-Fulani society
- The third level concerns certain ethnic groups across central and west Africa
- At any of these levels, relationships are expressed through poking or joking by teasing each other.
- This kind of behaviour can be found even between strangers who discover that they are cousins

## Pulaaku

- This is a code of conduct that is very unique to the Mbororo-Fulani
- It comprises four main principles:
  - *Munyal* = patience, self control, discipline
  - *Semteende* = modesty, respect
  - *Hakkiilo* = wisdom, forethought, managing one's own
  - *Tiidal* = courage, hard work

## Recommendation

- Call on WIPO IGC to accelerate the adoption of an International legally binding Instrument for the protection of TK, TCEs and GR.
- Encourage WIPO to provide adequate funding to record and documents indigenous TK, TCEs and GR.
- Call on WIPO members state to increase their contribution to the VF.



**Thanks for kind attention**

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