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National College Of Art And Design
Craft Department
(Metal Work)

The Art of the Wodaabe of Niger
and the Nuba of Kau

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Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design and Complementary Studies in
Candidacy for the degree of Batchelor of Craft Design

4th Year Project Submission

5th March 1993

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the support and guidance provided by my supervisor Mr. Joe McDonnell.

I also wish to acknowledge the assistance provided by Mr. Timothy Considine, Mr. Loman Brophy and Ms. Mary Seery for their assistance in the preparation of material for this essay.

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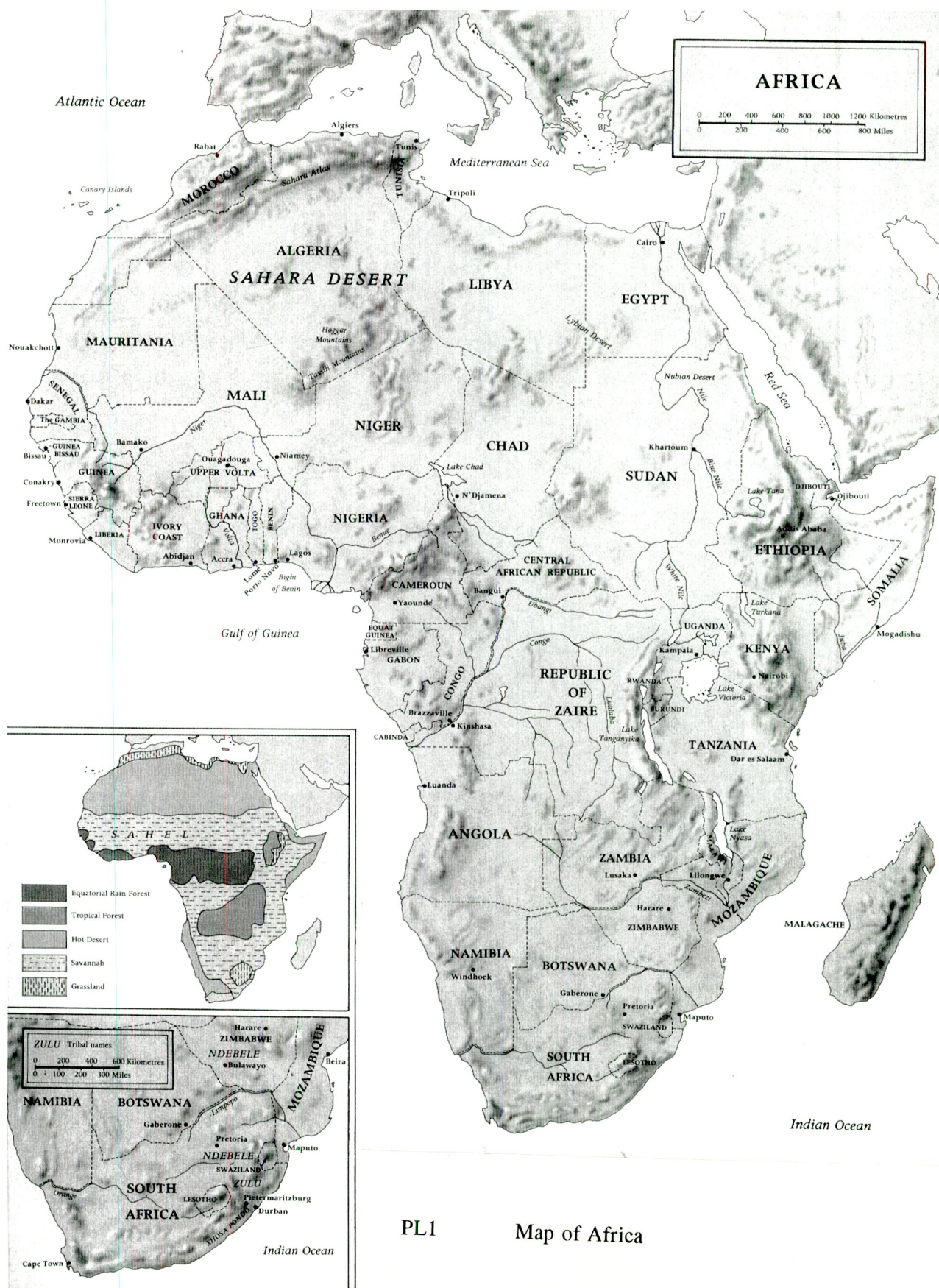
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Introduction :- The Art Of the Wodaabe of Niger and the Nuba of Kau.

Changes in the outwards appearance of man can be found all over the world. Archaeological discoveries reveal that people have always adorned themselves and the manner in which this is accomplished has not changed even to the present day. However, as the idea of beauty varies from culture to culture there are also many differences. Tattoos for example, an adornment of the body found in parts of Africa, and in other parts of the world, are not to everybody's liking. The same applies to a much greater degree to skull deformation or nose, ear and lip plugs. Today in our western society jewellery is a sign of wealth and extravagance. The lustre and rarity of stone in a piece of jewellery plays an important part in helping people to make their choice as to what to buy. There is a marked similarity between the amulets, talisman and ritual body painting of primitive races and the jewellery that symbolises status and wealth of western culture. For many African tribes, even though a piece of jewellery such as a talisman or an amulet may hold little or no material worth, it finds great value from its deep religious significance. A richly adorned woman shows that she comes from a wealthy family and contributes as much to her husband's status as his herd of cattle.

Adornment or changes in the outward appearance can be either permanent or temporary. Permanent adornments include tattoos, scar tattoos, elongation of the skull or neck, filling of the teeth, inlaid work of the teeth, piercing of the nose, septum or ear lobe, external ear, lip, tongue and cheek plugs. While temporary adornments include body painting, dying of the hair, fingernails teeth and beards and plucking of the body hair and eyebrows. Hair styles with false hair, wigs or head dresses are also possibilities.

Two African tribes and their cultures, the Wodaabe of Niger and the Nuba of Kau are under discussion here. Each culture has its own way of decorating the body, which is their main art form. Both tribes use permanent and temporary forms of adornment, however, the end results are very different.

The Wodaabe of Niger, have a very definite beauty ideal, and as a result their art is not as varied and as imaginative as that of the Nuba. The Wodaabe tribe use the art of face painting, hair styling and tattooing as well as using jewellery and costumes. All their art forms hold deep ritual significance, however, only tattooing and in particular the wearing of talismen has religious significance.

The other tribe studied, the people of Kau called the Nuba, "are a wild and passionate people....Their faces and bodies which resemble living Picassos are unequalled by any surviving primitive race on earth." [1]. This African tribe use the art form of face masking, body painting, hair styling and tattooing more than they use jewellery or costumes to change their outward appearance. The Nuba have an exceptional gift of imagination and feeling of graphic design, this is clearly seen in their art, as they oil, paint and adorn themselves daily. These paintings have only a small measure of ritual significance depending on the colours used. Hair styles for the boys and tattooing for the girls enables the tribe to recognise at a glance the wearers status, and so does not fulfil a purely aesthetic function.

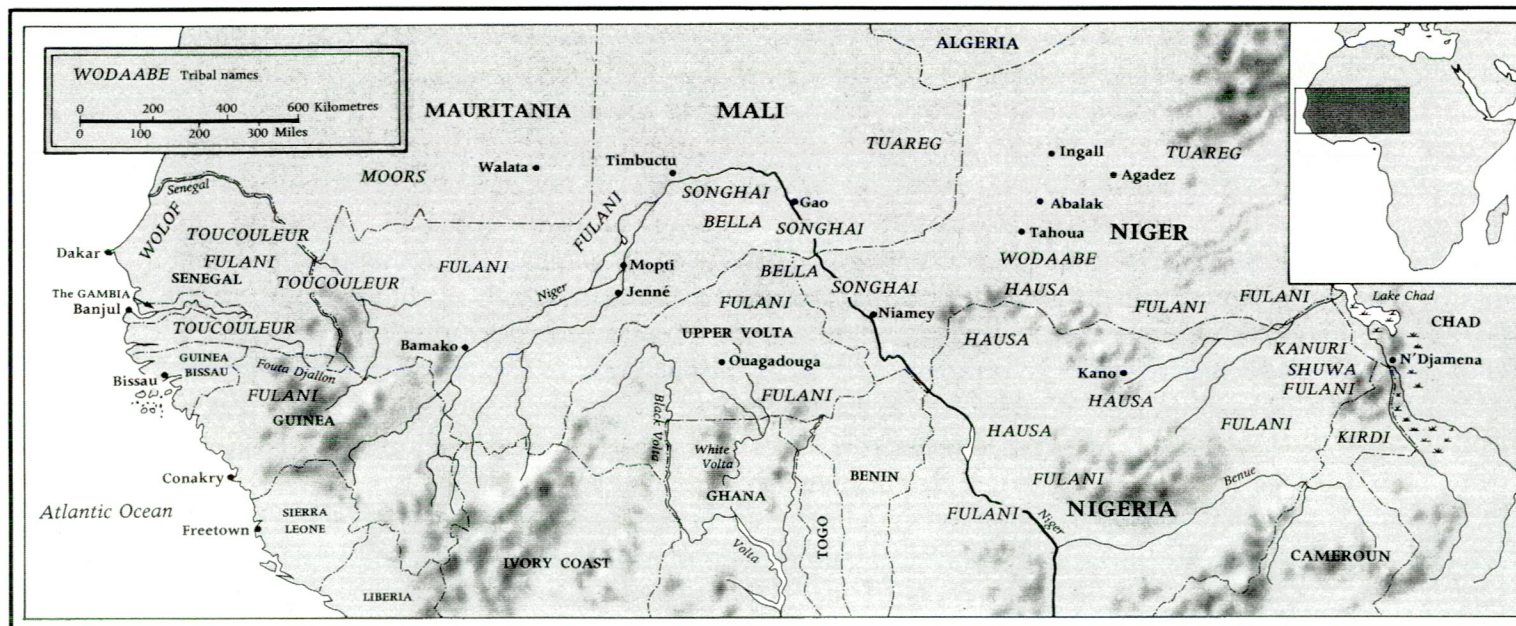
Both tribes and their lifestyles are outlined in the first chapter, having regard to the fact that one is settled and farms the land while the other is nomadic, depending largely on their livestock. The traditions and the social structure of the tribes, and the basic differences derived from this structure will also be examined.

In the second chapter the culture of both tribes are described in some detail. Both tribes hold important dances, arranged fights and races during times of celebration. This has an effect on their personal art as it is at this time that they are trying to impress and gain approval from other members of the tribe. Partners for marriage are often selected at this time. So both men and women strive to look their best. In the case of the Wodaabe, the whole tribe wait patiently all year round for their two celebrations, the "Worso" and "Geerewol", and as this is the main coming together of the tribe, they take great care to adorn themselves. The Nuba who hold their celebrations through out the year at different times, their "dances of love" and "knife fights" are of equal importance as the "Worso" and "Geerewol" are to the Wodaabe. These celebrations are discussed in their own right, and also in relation to the way they affect their personal art. Their culture is important in relation to their art as it gives it freedom at certain times of the year and restricts it at other times.

The third chapter examines the art of both the Wodaabe and the Nuba i.e., their face and body painting, tattooing, their hair styles, jewellery and costumes. It examines where they acquire the materials for their various art forms and their elaborate artistic techniques. It also examines the significance of colour and design.

Finally, chapter four discusses the art of the Nuba of Kau in greater detail. Their art of facial and body design is both varied and fascinating as well as being unique to their culture, and in order to appreciate it fully, a more detailed examination is merited.

The study of these two tribes has proved fascinating in regard to their culture, lifestyles and art. This thesis will attempt to compare and contrast the two tribes while striving to highlight the richness of their art forms. The Wodaabe live approximately 1600 miles from the Nuba which in terms of the vastness of the African continent is not such a great distance. But yet both tribes have totally different beauty ideals and ways of viewing their art. In both tribes art is expressed through personal body adornments, however, it is the way they view their bodies in conjunction with their beauty ideals that gives them their unique art.



PL2

Map of Niger showing the Wodaabe tribe

Chapter One : -The Wodaabe Of Niger

1.1 Lifestyles

Some of the last African nomads, are a tribe called the Wodaabe. They live in central Niger between the Sarah Desert and the grasslands to the south [see footnote 1](Pl.1) and (Pl.2). This is a very barren landscape, where for nine months of the year hardly any rain falls. The absence of rainfall leaves the water levels in the wells very low and pastures sparse. It is this harsh climate which forces the Wodaabe to lead a nomadic existence. They belong to a larger group called the Fulani, who are scattered between Senegal and the Central African Republic. Among the Fulani, the Wodaabe are the only group who have preserved their traditions. However, the only remaining bond with the Fulani today is their language, Fulfulde.

The Wodaabe are herdsmen who are continually on the move. They depend largely on their cattle or *zebu* for subsistence, but they also keep sheep, goats, donkeys and camels. They are constantly in search of pasture and water for their herds. They know their environment very well and have adapted their way of life to it. Despite their harsh environment, the Wodaabe maintain a philosophical outlook to life. They believe that life has both joy and suffering, the important thing is to have "patience and fortitude" [2] to endure the hardship of the dry season. They believe that it is their tradition that "keeps them alive and enables them to live together." [3]. The power of tradition among the Wodaabe is indicated by their name which means "the people of taboo." The respect they have for their tradition is not of religious origin. However, they vaguely believe in a God and anything they do not understand like sickness or death, they attribute to the spirit world. "Tradition alone constitutes the fate that draws them together and enables them to live." [4] They leave no trace of themselves as they travel from encampment to encampment. Their encampments are comprised of small, semi-circular, roofless shelters made from branches or thorny bushes (Pl.3). Each encampment is made up of an extended family. The group migrates together through out the year. The Wodaabe are a polygamous society, the first or basic union being an arranged marriage. The parents choose their son's partner from the same lineage in the tribe. A couple is usually betrothed from birth. A man may have as many as four wives, from any lineage. Each wife must leave her own encampment and live in her husbands camp. If a man has several wives each of them will have their own shelter or "*Suudu*", their own milk cows and their own activities, however, co-spouses rarely enjoy a friendly relationship.

The men are masters of the encampment and responsible for the herds, choosing pasture and watering them, treating animals for illness and choosing the itinerary for the



migrations. In the evenings however, they have time to socialise around the fire. In contrast the women have little time off to socialise. They are responsible for maintaining their own suudu, milking the cows morning and evening, cooking food for their husband and family and making clothes for them.

Hospitality is important in the Wodaabe tradition. The men always have time for camaraderie and for welcoming guests, as is believed that guests bring happiness and honour. The Wodaabe try to anticipate their guests desires by offering tea and milk or by slaughtering a sheep or goat as a sign of esteem.

There are weekly markets which provide the Wodaabe an opportunity to barter, buy and sell. During the dry season they obtain millet, blankets and water skins, while in the raining season they buy salt for their animals and items of adornment in anticipation for the "Worso" and "Geerewol". The women sell their excess milk and butter in order to buy "calabashes" (traditional vessels), clothing, spices and cereals.

During the dry season, they depend on wells and their migrations are short. However, they must follow the rains north, in order to find new grass and water for their animals. Then during the long migrations the Wodaabe may move as often as every other day, using their donkeys, pack-oxen and oxen carry all their possessions.

1.2 Culture

When the rainy season comes the Wodaabe get ready for their celebrations. There are two main dances which take place during the seven day festival. During the "Worso" they celebrate the births and marriages that have taken place during the year, while in the "Geerewol", men compete in charm, personality and beauty in search of a new partner. Similarly the Nuba hold two festivals called the "The Dance of Love" and "The knife fights" which are held at different intervals through out the year. For both of these tribes these celebrations are important in their own right as well as in relation to their art. Both the men and the women tend to spend longer periods adorning themselves at this time. They are also allowed to be more imaginative and freer in their artistic expression. This is especially true for the Wodaabe as they tend not to adorn themselves at any other time of the year.

With the coming of the rains, the Wodaabe prepare for the first celebration of this festive season. During the Worso which lasts for up to four days, members of sub-lineage gather together. When the Wodaabe reunite after a year of relative solitude, long and formal greetings are exchanged. The numerous rituals which mark the births and

marriages are undergone during the Worso. The final ritual of the birth ceremony is called Toko, during which a bull is slaughtered in honour of the son or daughter. The meat is then shared by the families of the child's parents. For the married women, the work of setting up their encampment includes preparing for display their most prized belongings - Calabashes "*Kaakol*" and "*Elletel*". The women stroll through their encampments in their finest attire, to inspect one another's possessions. At the most beautiful display of calabashes, they stop and show their approval with a song and dance.

The men race camels to the delight of large groups of spectators at the finish line. The camel saddles are made from a wooden structure covered in red and green waffled leather and decorated with silver strips. These saddles are kept in protective wrappings for most of the year so that they will be in perfect condition for the ceremonies. However the men do not make these saddles themselves. They are purchased at markets.

The Geerewol is the name of both the dance and the seven day celebration uniting two lineage of the Wodaabe, which is held at the close of the rainy season. During the festival, young men assemble in the late afternoon to perform the "*Yaake*", a dance in which they attempt to display their beauty, charisma and "*Togu*" or charm. At this time each year men can enjoy a fantasy image of themselves far removed from their banal everyday lives.

The men compete in luring the young girls with their "... languorous looks and apparent wild grimaces." [5]. Before the dance they drink stimulating concoctions made from pulverised bark which enables them to perform for hours in a trance like state. "Teetering on tip-toe they turn their heads from side-to-side and part their *kahl* or black lips to reveal their teeth. To emphasise the whites of their eyes they roll their eyeballs, holding them in a fixed stare for added effect." [6] (Pl.4) . As they line up oiled and ornamented before the women each youth carries a ceremonial axe, the crest of which represents a man's coiffure while the patterns of the body painting are worked on it. The festival begins with a prayer-like chant. The young men line up singing in the same weird, high pitch note and balancing lightly on the balls of their feet, staring at the women. They hold themselves straight, arms linked, baring their eyes and teeth. A watching crowd comments and criticises, e.g., old ladies make fun of the ugly men. The men continue to make "*mous*", i.e., arching their bodies and rolling their eyes as the girls come towards them and kneel in front of them. A girl will then leave the group and approach the men who are "... frantically peering and making faces in an effort to seduce



PL4

Young Wodaabe men dancing the "*Ruume*"

her to choose them." [7] With a movement of her arm she indicates the dancer she has chosen, and with whom she may discretely spend the night. (Pl.5) This festival provides the main chance of the year for them to initiate relationships and find a second, third or fourth partner.

There is another dance, the "*Ruume*", a welcoming dance which is performed each morning and evening of the festival. (Pl.6) Young men wearing large hats form a tight circle around the elders stepping, clapping and singing. The elders encourage their dancing while the young girls parade nearby with umbrellas, admiring them. The seventh evening marks the end of the Geerewol and the young men dance until sunrise. The morning after the last dance the lineage depart and start their migration. The raining season celebrations leave the Wodaabe rich memories to see them through the long dry season ahead.



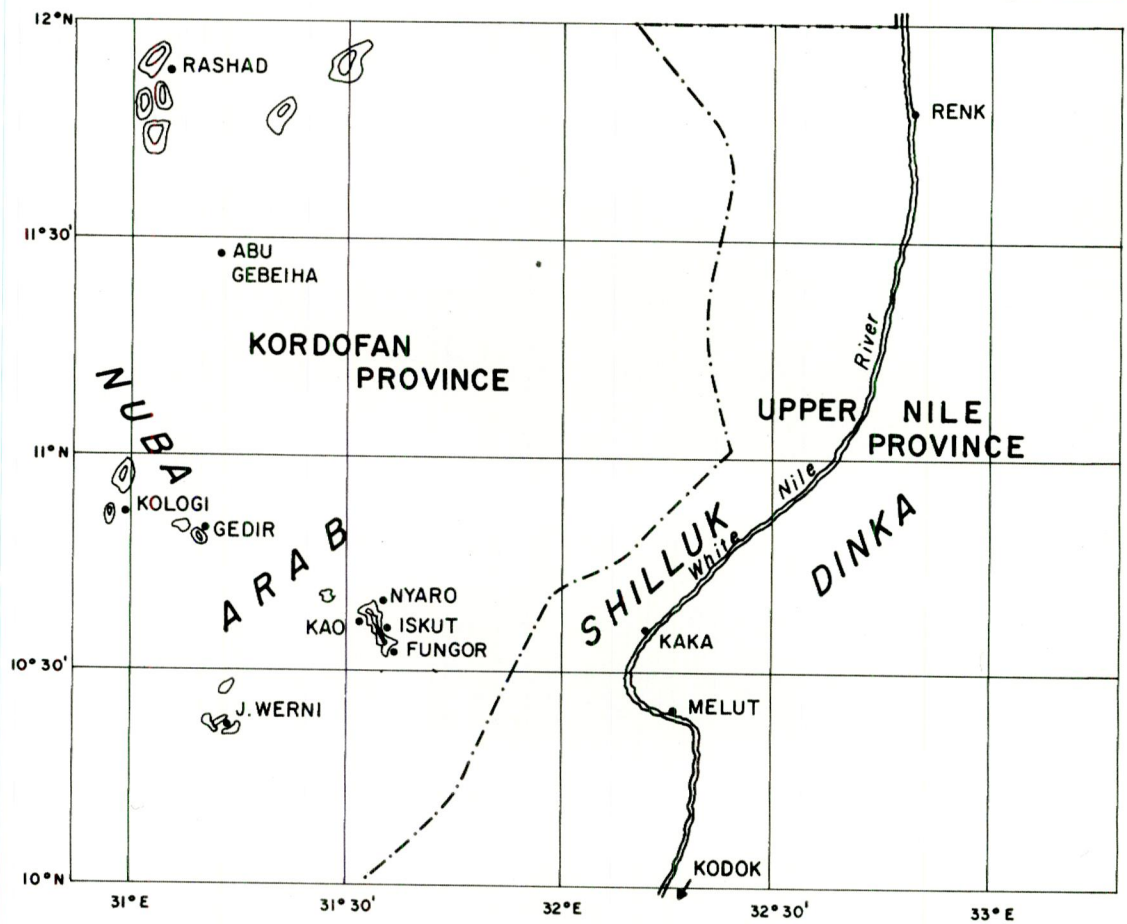
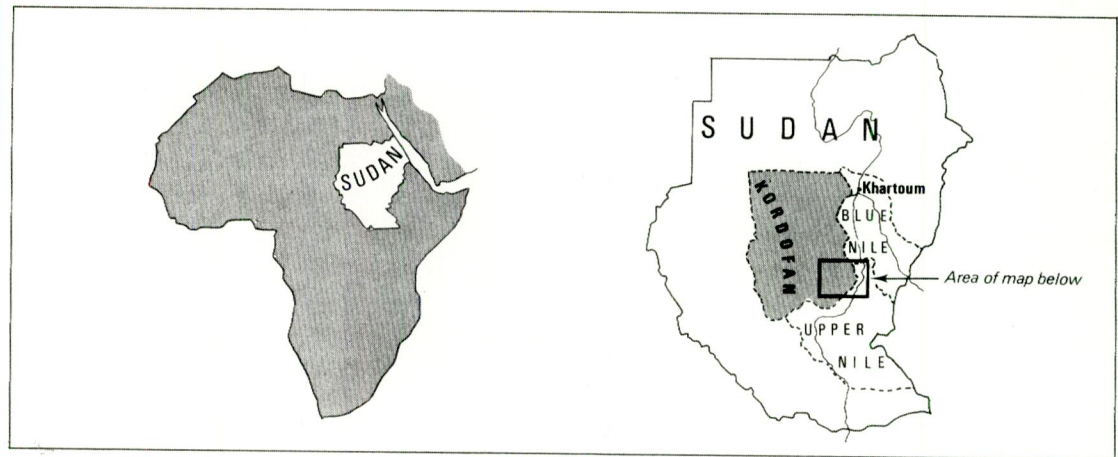
PL5

Young Wodaabe men dancing the "Yaake"



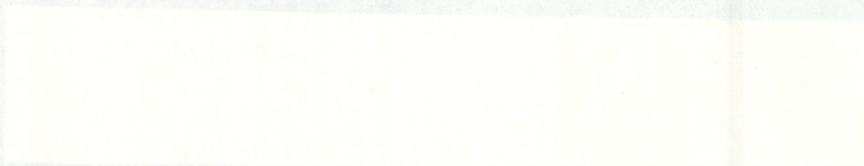
Young Wodaabe men dancing the "Yaake" waiting to be chosen by the most beautiful young woman

PL6



PL7

Map of Sudan showing the Nuba tribes and the villages of Kau, Nyaro and Fungor



Chapter Two :- The Nuba of Kau

2.1 Lifestyles

In the south-east corner of the Sudanese province of Kordofan, there are more than one hundred Nuba tribes or Mesakin Quissayr tribes, that inhabit the remote villages of the Nuba mountains [see footnote 2] (Pl.7). They are members of a language group numbering ten thousand and up until 1970 had been entirely shielded from the outside world. They coat their bodies with snow white ash while harvesting, wrestling and burying their dead. About one hundred and twenty-five miles from these Mesakin Quissayr are situated three villages: Kau, Nyaro and Fungor, who have a total population of 3, 000. The nearest seat of government is about eighty miles away at Abu Gubeha. The Nuba of Kau have little in common with the Mesakin Quissayr and even speak a different language and observe different customs.

The ancient ways and customs of the Nuba such as the art of face and body painting, knife fighting and dances of love are quite unique to these people. Probably the main reason that they manage to preserve their traditions is the fact that they have lived for so long in total isolation. This is because the rough tracks which lead to these villages become such a morass that during the six months of the raining season it is not possible for any outsiders to reach their villages.(Pl.8) The Nuba tribe are a settled community who hunt and cultivate the land as well as owning animals. This is the first and most obvious difference between the two tribes.

Only a few miles separate the three villages all of which are situated on the flanks of large rugged Nuba hills. Grain-storing as well as other important huts are built on these rocky hills for protection from the large volumes of rain which fall during the rainy season. The Nuba are an agricultural people, their lands are mainly sown with sorghum, a very nutritious type of millet. This forms their staple diet. However, they also grow cotton, sesame seeds and ground nuts. They extract oils from the seeds and nuts which they use in large quantities in cooking, oiling their bodies and it is also a popular drink, especially among the fighters. Most of the families in these villages keep cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and chickens. They also hunt antelope and several kinds of felines including the leopard which often take their cattle by night. As hunters and gathers, their knowledge of their surrounding environment is extremely detailed.

As with hunting and tending for the cattle, house building is a male occupation. However both men and women tend to the strenuous work in the fields. Domestic work is only carried out by women. This work is often very laborious, e.g. the grinding of



corn which takes several hours and the gathering of fire-wood and water. Often the women leave two hours before sunrise to fetch the water because during the dry season the water holes dry up. They walk high up into the hills to find water, to avoid the mid-day temperatures. Often water is fetched twice a day "This gives them plenty of scope for clandestine meetings with their lovers in scheduled caves"[8]

They trade with Arabs in the surrounding area, but only to obtain mirrors which they use to aid themselves in their face and body painting. They also trade for some materials used in self-adornment, e.g., additional oil and blue pigment which the men use in their face painting and hairstyles.

In the Nuba society marriage is governed by strict rules. A man who wishes to marry a girl must first perform eight years work in the field for her family. However, when taking a second or third wife the qualification is lessened considerably. If a man wants to marry he merely presents his wife-to-be with gifts of oil or jewellery. There are many married women who are divorced or who have left their husbands. Unlike the Wodaabe, where the men choose the wives of their marriages or where they are arranged by the parents of a couple, the Nuba girls have an input into their choice of husband. This happens during the dances of love.

There are two main events which take place several times a year in these villages: The Dances of Love and The Knife Fights. The knife fights take place between the men of the three villages. These fights have a strong bearing on the Nuba's love life. The better the fighter, the better his chances with the opposite sex. "A victor is held in such high esteem that even a married woman may sleep with him if she wants to bear his child, her husband will adopt and rear it as his own." [9] and he will be proud of this fact. A few hours after the knife fights take place, the dance of love begins. The girls dance late into the night to the beat of drums, and often choose to hold secret rendezvous later on with the men who championed in the knife fights.

A similarity to this unusual practice may also be found amongst the Wodaabe. It is of utmost importance for a woman from the nomadic tribe, to bear *beautiful* children. In the case where a husband feels he is unattractive he will encourage/allow his wife to sleep with a more handsome man in order that she will bear an attractive child.

2.2 Culture

The Nuba tribe celebrations take place at different times during the year. Knife fights take place between the men of the three Nubian villages - Kau, Nyaro and Fungor. The

timing of these fights is decided by the priests of the villages. The fights are a display of courage and skill and also play a large role in the fighter's love-life. The better a fighter performs the better his prospects with the opposite sex. The Dance of Love follows shortly after the knife fights. "Zuar" or knife fights is practised by men between the ages of eighteen and thirty years. "It is a ferocious sport but a fair one." [10] (Pl.9) The duels are fought with two heavy crescent shaped blades fastened to the wrist. The fight is announced by cries from men perched high up in the rocks in the surrounding hills. There are two referees attending each fight. No women attend the fights. Initially the men first start to fight with staves, soon however they soon begin to fight with their wrist blades. (Pl.10) "This is a graceful and balletic alternation of attack and defence, lunge and parry.... any blow is legitimate, whatever part of the body it lands on, but the most common target is the head. Head blows connect with an audible crack that evokes ecstasy from the winners supporters and sends them swarming across the arena." [11] The loser is the one who lacks the strength to continue.

After these fights, the men have a few hours in which to recover and prepare themselves for the Dance of Love. They re-oil, ochre and paint their bodies before the next event. The Dance of Love or "Nyertun", occurs after the zuar or knife fighting. The dance begins with a wild flurry of drums. The first girls who arrive have been adorned with particular care. They wear ostrich or brass clasps in their hair, their bodies oiled for the occasion. (Pl.11; ref. to Pl.22,) The girls begin by dancing in groups of two or three, but soon the floor fills up. "The drumming grows louder, the dances wilder... ...the girls bodies glint as if gilded among the swirling clouds of sunlit dust. They almost all have perfect figures and their legs are remarkably long, slender and athletic. They sway their hips in time to the drums, holding supple twigs or long whips platted from leather thongs, as aids to the dance." [12]

The fighters now join the dance. Their movements are slower than that of the girls. "Poised on one leg, they revolve on the spot with their staves in their hand." [13] At a special drum beat they halt and let out a cry out. The men now leave the dance floor, sit on a stone wall nearby but are forbidden to watch the girls as they continue dancing. (Pl.12) The girls slowly approach the men, "then one of the girls dances up to a fighter until her body almost brushes his, quick as a flash she swings one leg over his head and rests it on his shoulder." [14] Soon all the girls have chosen a man, and the men leave the scene of the dance. However the girls continue to dance well into the night. (Pl.13; Pl.14) The men wait until nightfall before meeting the girl at her parents' home. A union of this type may result in marriage, however there is no compulsion to do so.



PL9

Knife fights between the young men of Kau and Fungor



PL10

Wrist blades worn during the knife fights





THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARY

1960



PL12

Nuba men are forbidden to look at the girls during
the Dance of Love



PL13

Nuba girls dancing during the Dance of Love



PL14

Nuba girls dancing during the Dance of Love

Chapter Three

Art of Wodaabe & Nuba Tribes

Art and body adornments play an important role in the lives of both the Wodaabe and the Nuba. However there is a significant difference in motivation between the two tribes. The body adornments of both tribes consist of face and body painting, oiling of the body, face and body tattooing, hair styling, head dresses costumes and jewellery. A woman may also decorate her possessions.

Like a lot of nomadic tribes in Africa, art is an indication of wealth for the Wodaabe. However it must be said that they are a very vain people. Body adornment is used mainly to enhance and flaunt the beauty they feel they are naturally endowed with. On the other hand, for the Nuba, body adornment is a means of appreciating and celebrating their health and beauty.

Art will also indicate the status of the wearer in the Nuba tribe. For the girls, this status is indicated by tattooing and for the men it is shown through hair style and colours of adornment. The Nuba consider black to be a beautiful and healthy colour, and as a result only the best fighters can cover themselves totally in black for the knife fights. In contrast, the Wodaabe consider pale skin to be beautiful and so the men during the Geerewol paint their faces with yellow ochre.

The way both tribes look upon nakedness is also different. As the Nuba celebrate a beautiful and healthy body, it is only the young members of the tribe who are allowed to be naked. If the body has been injured in any way or ceases to be beautiful because of old age, then it must be covered by clothing. On the other hand for the Wodaabe only older women who are mothers are allowed to go topless (but not naked) since they are considered to be past the stage of flirting!

The people of Kau adorn themselves daily. The girls oil their bodies while the men paint and decorate themselves. However, while they are working in the fields they do not adorn their bodies. In contrast however, except for the Geerewol and Worso where great effort is made in relation to self-adornment, the Wodaabe remain unadorned for most of the year.

Until recent times both tribes have had very little influence from the outside world. This is the main reason why they have been able to preserve their traditions and their unique art forms. The Nuba's cultural and artistic preservation is maintained by the

almost total inaccessibility to the isolated villages where they live. Similarly, the Wodaabe, who in spite of the fact that they live in the heart of trading links between north and west Africa, have resisted where possible all outside influence and cultural change.

In both tribes, they view their art as being important in relation to their bodies. Their society and their interpersonal relationships play an important role in their art. The Wodaabe are a very vain people, the main function of their art is to enhance their own beauty. They have very precise beauty ideals to which they always adhere, as a result they have little freedom for imagination in relation to their adornment in comparison to the Nuba who look upon their art as a means of celebrating their health and beauty. It is only the young in the village who adorn their bodies. When a body becomes ugly for whatever reason they try not to draw attention to it in any way and so will abstain from their daily oiling of the body. The Nuba are concerned with "...the natural symmetry of the body, both the vertical bilateral symmetry and the balance of the horizontal arrangement of parts, are relevant variables in the style, form and aesthetics" of their art. [15] . They are concerned with celebrating the perfect body and achieve this through their art. They view their art only in relation to their bodies. " The body is regarded by them as the consummation of Nuba art. As a symbol the body represents perfect beauty and is their medium of artistic expression." [16].

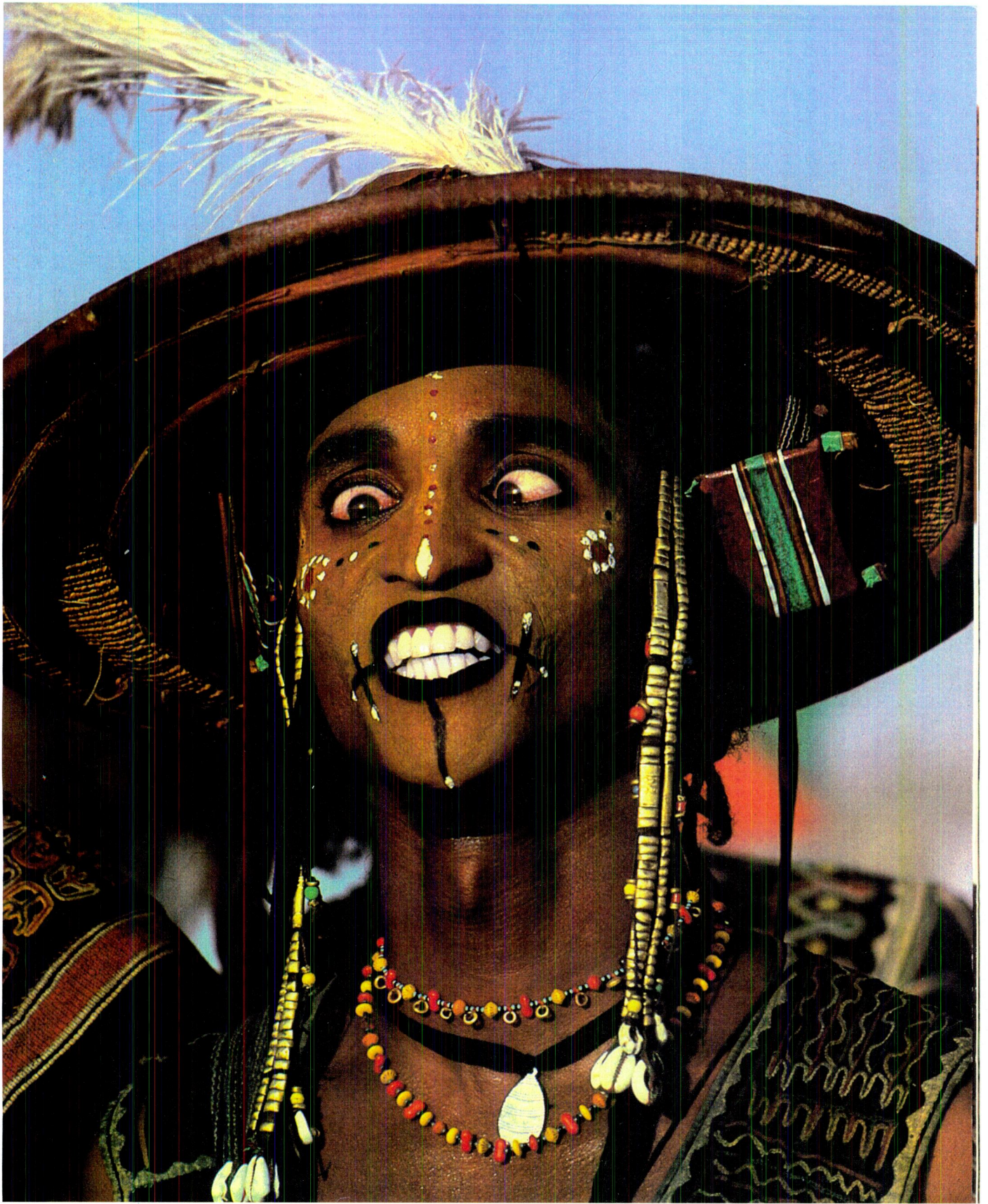
The Nuba consider long slender bodies to be beautiful. This is emphasised by the daily oiling. Scarification of a woman's body is also considered to be an attractive feature. A woman who has a full set of tattoos is considered very beautiful and sought after by the opposite sex. They also use face painting to emphasise or de-emphasise certain features, e.g. small eyes are made larger by blackening the area around the eye. (Pl.15) A design on the side of the face or on the forehead can draw attention away from a nose which is considered too large. The natural contours of the face can be emphasised by dramatic lines drawn diagonally from the crown of the head towards the centre.

The Wodaabe have a complex and very specific beauty ideal. A perfect body's features include a tall slender body and long thin hands, long face with a high forehead, large eyes (the white parts being considered particularly beautiful), a long thin nose, thin lips, a long supple neck and straight hair. (Pl.16; Pl.17) Beauty is very important especially, strangely enough, amongst the young men who wish to attract women. As a result they spend hours adorning themselves. Since the Wodaabe believe that they have been bestowed with the greatest beauty on earth, mothers often gently stretch their young



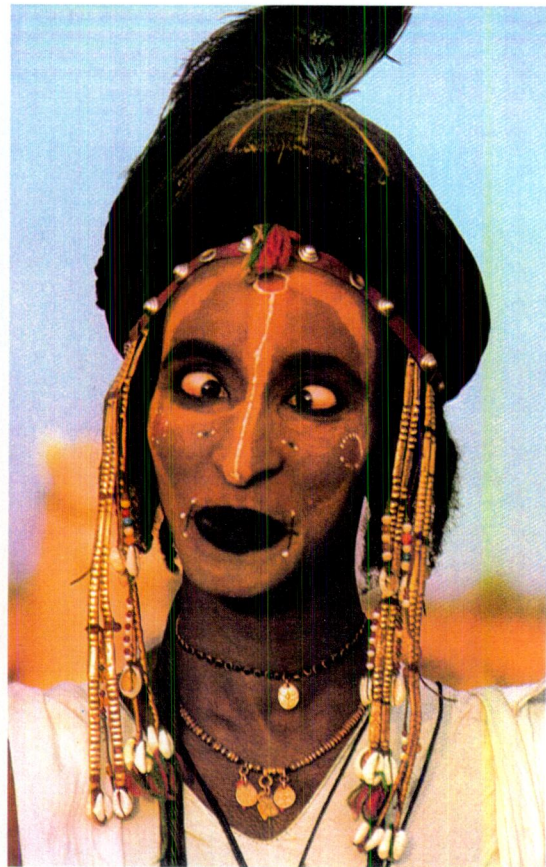
PL15

Nuba man, note how his facial design enlarged his eyes



PL16

Wodaabe man dressed for the "*Ruume*"



PL17

Wodaabe men portraying the traditional beauty ideal of their tribe

baby's limbs and press their nose between thumb and forefinger to lengthen them and make them thinner.

They paint their faces a light ochre in order to lighten its colour. In order to achieve a high forehead they shave their hair. They blacken around their eyes and mouth, to emphasise the whiteness of their teeth and eyes. A line of make-up along their nose emphasises its length. To enable the body to look tall and slender - they bind their knees together during some of the dances to create the appropriate illusion.

As their beauty ideal is so clearly defined it does not leave much scope for their own imagination in relation to face masking. They merely vary slightly the existing ideals. It also has an unfortunate consequence for those who fail to fall within the parameters of beauty. Ugliness and physical abnormalities will be sure to bring suffering to the person concerned. However this can be overcome by singing, story-telling and personal charm or charisma. Such personal characteristics are also given importance in Wodaabe society.

Aside from face masking there is plenty of room for their artistic imagination in relation to their costumes and jewellery. For example they sometimes attach bells to their head dresses. There is a great variety of design and skill displayed in the embroidered panels on their tunics. They often attach objects found or items bought at the markets to their belts or necklaces, in a effort to make them more original.

Wodaabe Art Forms

The use of amulets or talisman as protection against evil demons and spirits is widespread in Africa. They believe that "...there is a power which controls our everyday existence, a force which decrees whether we shall be rich or poor, happy or unhappy, whether we shall succeed or fail." [17]. Today some people would call this force luck. Before Christianity and the Moslem faith found their way into tribal Africa there existed countless numbers of religious cults. The belief in a god who created all, in demons and other unfriendly spirits were common place. Amulets were often made by the tribal witch doctor. Usually they consisted of "... a more or less noxious collection of rubbish contained in a small bag which was suspended from the neck." [18]. As well as personal amulets a village or tribe may often have a special collection of amulets or a tribal fetish. This consists of a wooden or stone carving which is said to represent their God or Gods. "Some would be extremely crude, other would be exquisite examples of sculpting and artistic skill." [19].

Both tribes believe strongly in the effectiveness of their amulets or talisman. The Wodaabe believe that certain root, powders, grasses and bark have magical powers. They have traditional remedies, which are prepared following recipes passed from generation to generation, and are part of the inheritance of a lineage. The talisman consist a leather pouches filled with these powders. First the leather is cut into strips and pierced with holes. Each strip is made into a small pouch, into which is put a mixture of powders, bark and perfumes according to the magical recipes. Finally the pouches are strung together with a thin leather chord so that it can be worn around the neck across the chest and around the elbow. (Pl.18)

The talismen have different functions according to the different powders and bark that they contain. Such functions include:

- 1.) Sometimes they are worn on turbans to ward off evil spirits
- 2.) Dancers may wear them to improve their performance.
- 3.) Some contain an Islamic blessing for charm or a blessing for beauty.
- 4.) To make a man irresistible.
- 5.) To make a man impervious to injury, e.g., guard him against snake bites, protect him against him enemies,
- 6.) To make a man invisible at night.

Again tattooing and scar tattooing are permanent adornments used by both tribes. Tattooing usually takes place either at birth or at puberty. There are six main reasons as to why these rather harrowing techniques are used by the two tribes. However, the significance of the various reasons may differ between the two. The reasons include:-

- 1.) To denote the tribe into which a person was born or has joined through marriage.
- 2.) As slave marks. This type of scarification was used in slave ridden days for identification and to denote ownership. These scars were more often than not applied by force. Most of the Nigerian tribes scarify themselves in order to distinguish their members from those of other tribes. This was necessary in the days of slavery to prevent loss of identification. "Some of the more powerful tribes, however, now scorn the custom as being in itself being the hallmark of slavery, and to this day pure bred Fulani have no tribal marks at all." [20] .
- 3.) To beautify or to decorate the wearer. These are applied to both the face and other parts of the body. In some cases charcoal is rubbed into the cut to give them a permanent colour.
- 4.) It is believed that they can prevent sickness. These are often applied to the abdominal area, around the navel, and they are sometimes found in the temples to prevent headaches.



PL18

Talismen worn by the Wodaabe



- 5.) To denote status of the wearer within a tribe.
- 6.) To ward off evils spirits and to protect the wearer. If a mother lost a large number of children in succession she would often "vary the usual tribal markings on her subsequent children, with the intention of rendering them unrecognisable to the spirit that had robbed her of her previous children." [21].

Both tribes only tattoo and scarify girls. The Wodaabe scarify a few days after a child is born. Scarification is used to denote what lineage the wearer comes from, to prevent sickness, to ward evil spirits but the main reason being to beautify. To scarify themselves, small cuts in the skin are made with a razor blade and covered with charcoal. On healing they leave a dark blue pattern of finely raised lines. During infancy a traditional fan shaped pattern is worked at the corners of the mouth. As a child grows, geometric patterns are added at the temples, on the forehead, alongside the nose and on the chin. (Pl.19)

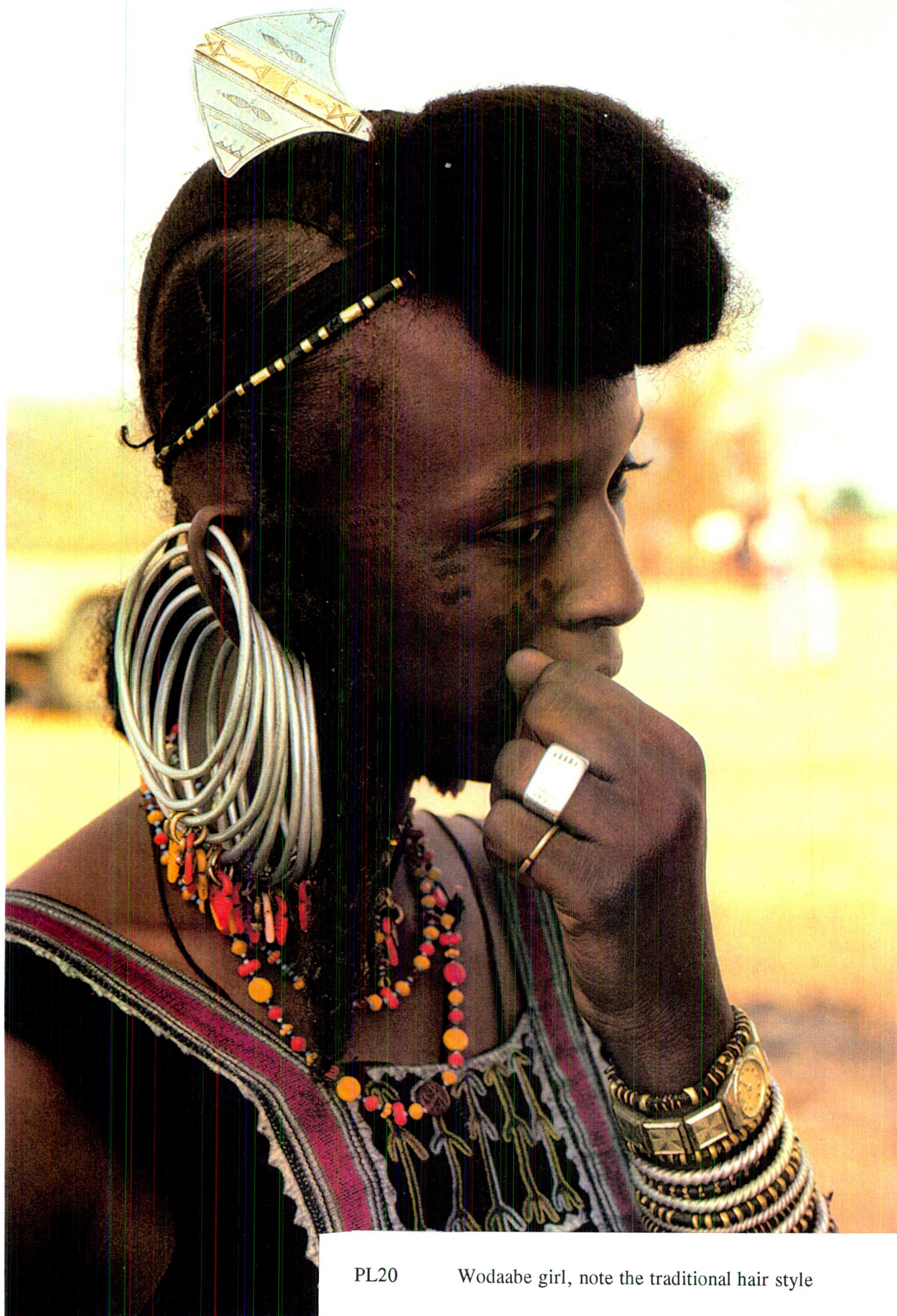
Hairdressing is done by women. (Pl.20, Pl.21) Traditionally they arrange their own hair into four braids, two to the side, a third braid twisted into a knot on the forehead, and the fourth on the nape of the neck. Butter is sometimes rubbed into the hair to soften it before plating. Men's hair is also platted. Once platted, his hairline above his forehead and on the nape of his neck is shaved with a razor blade. This is to fit into the criteria of the Wodaabe beauty ideal, i.e. the face must be long and the forehead high.

A mans wealth and source of prestige lies in his herds, a woman's in her collection of ceremonial calabashes. Calabashes, are crude hemispherical vessels, made from hard-rinded fruit of the calabash vine. When ripe, the gourds are harvested, dried and cut open and the insides scraped out. They have different uses depending on size and shape. Only a few are used as utensils to hold milk and millet porridge. The greater number are treasured for ceremonial reasons, e.g., a new born baby is traditionally bathed in a calabash.

A woman's collection of gourds consists of two portions, a traditional household portion and a ceremonial portion. There are two broad types of ceremonial calabashes "Elletel" and "kakool". A number of each type is given to a woman by her mother when she leaves home to live in her husband's camp. By inheriting these calabashes a woman provides her married daughter with the essential tools of the dairywoman's trade. These items also have a ritual value in that she passes onto her children the conventional symbols of domestic and economic service as well as female fertility. They are carried

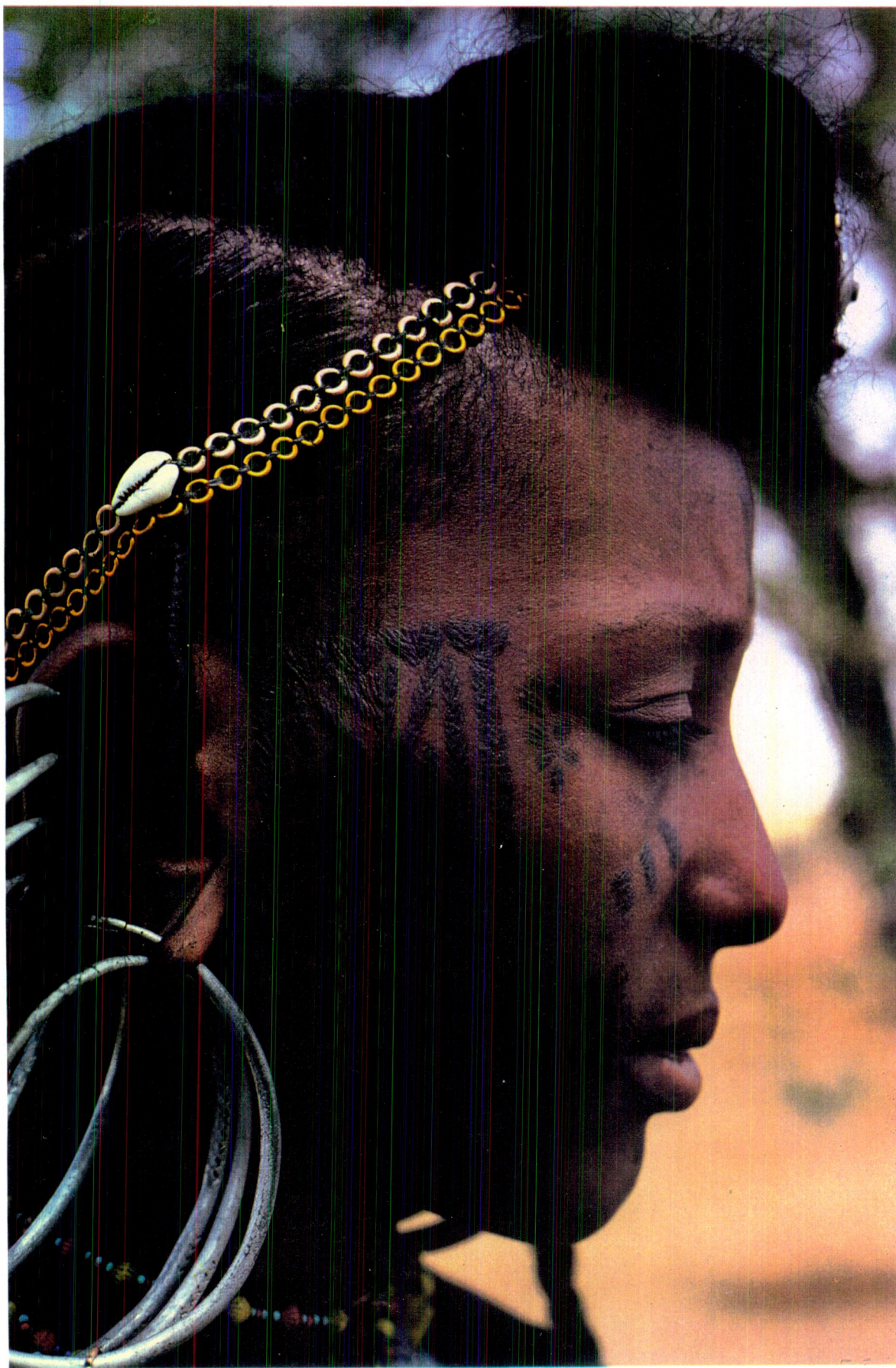


PL19 Wodaabe girl, note her facial tattoos



PL20

Wodaabe girl, note the traditional hair style



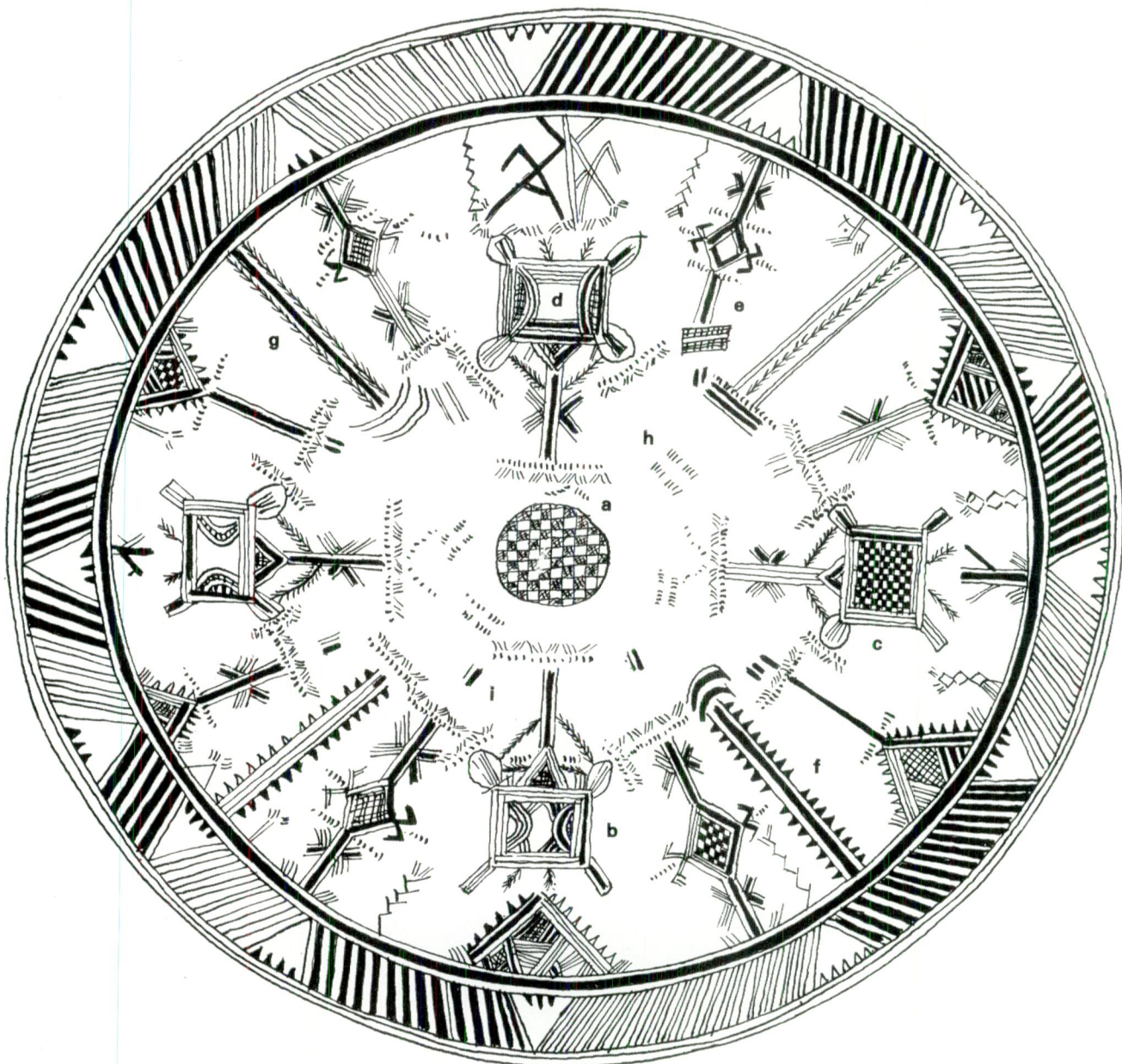
PL21

Wodaabe girl, note the traditional hair style
and facial tattoos

during migrations on the back of a special oxen and carefully displayed when camp is pitched at the end of a day. They are given constant care and attention, being carved with elaborate designs passed down through the generation. Using an awl, they decorate the outside with geometric designs and other motifs viz. triangles, half-moons, suns and sinuous lines. (Pl.22; Pl.23) Engraving a gourd is laborious and requires a fair amount of physical pressure with the engraving tool, as the awl is dragged across the surface of the gourd. This process consists of two stages, the marking out of the design with fine lines and the scraping away of the top layer of shell between alternate pairs of engraved lines. The complete design, consists of a number of engraved lines and narrow strips of undecorated relief alternating with strips where the outer shell has been removed. Usually the design is broken up into two main areas, the central area and the outer rim area.

The designs engraved on the calabash are believed to protect it and its contents from harm. Often curdled milk is rubbed onto the engravings to give it a pale colour. They are protected in woven baskets. The designs engraved on the calabashes are traditional but none the less provide an outlet for the woman's artistic talent. The close associations a woman has with her calabashes means that these utensils are regarded, to some extent, as personal extensions of herself and her activities. Therefore a woman's decorated gourds may function as personal adornment, enhancing the immediate environment, especially when a woman carries a gourd on her head. The calabash thus supplement the role of jewellery, though it may be difficult to see how objects so large and cumbersome, so difficult to transport, should be so important in a nomadic way of life. Their only explanation lies in their tradition, ritual and ceremonial significance. This can be seen at the end of the year during the festivals. The women display (with great pride) the vessels they have been working on through out the year. (Pl.24) They go around each encampment to admire each others calabashes, applauding the best and most beautiful designs. Originally, the calabash design served a practical function, which was a means of group identification, each lineage group had its own distinctive type of decoration, distinguished by the variation in the number and placement of the different design elements. Thus these designs fulfil the same function as tribal marks and often the motifs employed by the Wodaabe have the same names as their facial markings, to which they bear a close resemblance. However nowadays it seems that the functional value of these decorations has largely been forgotten and it is now a question of fashion rather than of lineage affiliation that determines the choice of design.

During the dry season, as they travel from camp to camp on donkeys, the women embroider blouses, skirts and tunics (for their men). Again the designs for these



PL22

Design of a Wodaabe ceremonial calabashe

- A. shell of a tortoise B. muslim prayer board C. beans on a board
- D. bows E. house lizard F. man of small stature
- G. "Buli" (referring to linear scarifications on forehead and nose)
- H. "Yuguna" (scarifications on cheeks)
- I. "Akolo" (referring to parallel cuts on either side of the nose)





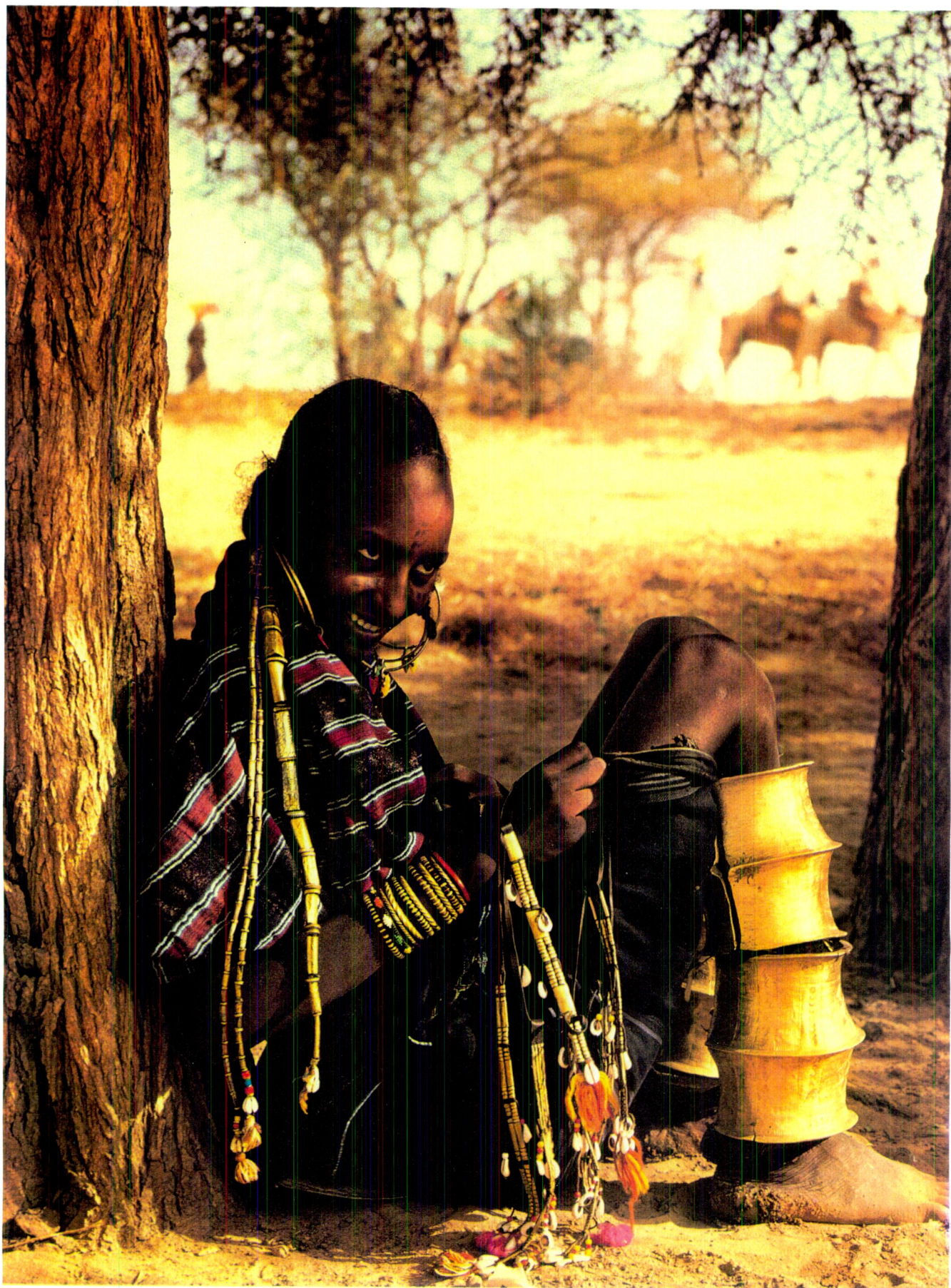
PL24 A display of a Wodaabe woman's ceremonial calabashes during the "Worso"



embroideries are passed down through generations. Folded head cloths are also stylishly decorated with brass chains, cowry shells and beads. Some Tuarge leather sandals are studded with thumb-tacks and attached to the head cloth. This is considered extremely chic.

They also collect small objects from which to make jewellery, in preparation for the Geerewol ceremony. Along with the calabashes, these are the only art forms they have. The jewellery worn consists of necklaces, earrings, hairpins, belts, amulets, headbands and bracelets. Brass hooped ear rings or "*yamde*" are threaded through as many as eleven holes in the rim of the ear which are usually pierced in early childhood. Long plats of hair wrapped in brass indicate that a girl is considered particularly beautiful and therefore will partake in judging the performance of the young men dancing at the Geerewol ceremony. The heavy brass anklets called *jabo* are traditionally given by a mother to her daughter and are worn to attract men's attention. "Their weight tends to make the hips swing when walking and adds an extra element of seduction." [22] (Pl. 25) Some girls can afford to wear two or three jabos and protect their legs from the metal with cloth wrappings. The anklets are only worn until the girl has borne her first child.

Young men devote much of their time to the preparation of the make-up and dress for the seven days of dancing during the Geerewol. The hairline is shaved and the hair is intricately platted. They blacken the eyelids and lips, while a yellow paste called *pura* is painted on the face. These preparations are believed to increase the dancer's power of seduction. Circles and dark designs in red and white are added afterwards purely for decorative purposes. At the corner of the mouth are dark triangular patterns, while other designs are painted on the nose and cheeks. (ref. to Pl.16, Pl.17) The basic complexion colour is ochre on the upper half of the body, while the chest and the neck is polished like mahogany. When the make up is finished white hair armlets are attached to the elbow. These armlets are made from Billy goats beards. A white turban is wrapped around the dancer's head. He wears leather amulets for protection and a black ostrich's feather secured to the top of his turban for virility. *Silkin* - strips of leather bound with brass and decorated with cowry shells, are hung at each side of his face. They also wear finely embroidered tunics, made for them by their girl-friends or wives. The men may also buy other eye catching items in the market to attach them to their tunics. Brass and copper head plaques are made for them by the *Hausa* and *Bella* (specially skilled craftsmen from other tribes), according to specific Wodaabe designs. They make the simple brass silkin themselves.



PL25

Young Wodaabe woman, note the brass duklets
and her plaits of hair wrapped in brass

At the festival the older men wear turbans and flowing gowns called *Bou-Bou* instead of their simple tunics and cotton trousers worn while travelling. They also decorate their camels with brightly coloured saddle blankets. Leather amulets called *Liagi* hang around the camels neck to protecting these valuable animals.

Art Forms of the Nuba

One of the main motives behind their personal art is of course aesthetics. Their art also holds a function of following precise social rules as well as serving as a status indicator.

Young girls in the village store their "cosmetics" in a small mud hut which is also used to store grain. A girl's cosmetics consist mainly of oil pigments, the oil is extracted from sesame and ground nuts. From the age of four onwards a girl has to adorn her body, head and hair with oil. (ref. to Pl.11) The colours of the oil range from red through to yellow and each clan wears a special shade to which they strictly adhere. All body decoration, male and female requires an oil base. Both the male and female oil themselves in the morning and evening regardless of whether or not they go on to further decorate their body. An un-oiled girl would feel "naked" and so cannot take part in the activities in the rest of the village. The same applies to the wearing of belts. Neither male nor female is ever seen without a belt. All the tribes of the Nuba are fond of self adornment. They make their jewellery from a wide range of materials such as leather, wood, roots, feathers, ground nut and dried berries. Jewellery is common however it is free from cultural or social significance, it is merely a display of wealth and a decorative effect. Girls often wear brass anklets and bracelets.

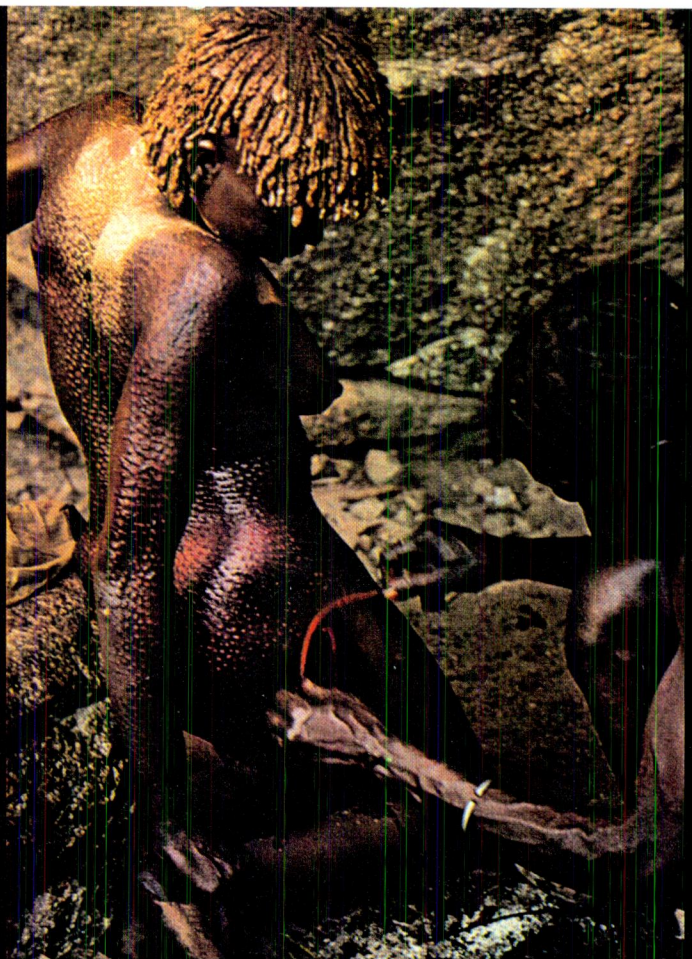
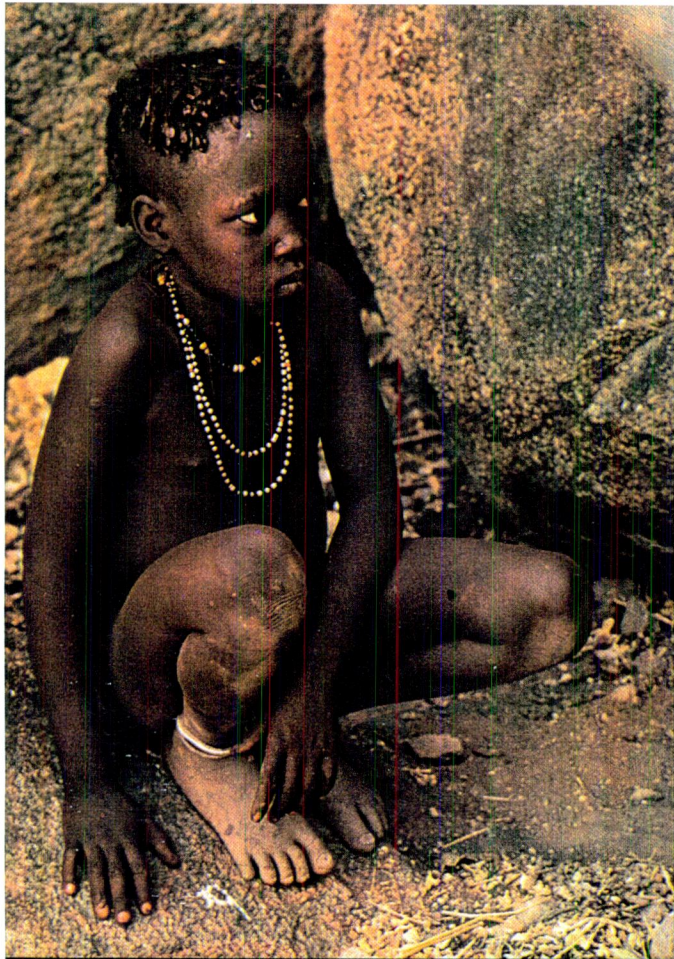
Both men and women wear small brass buckles strung on leather straps around their wrist. They also wear ear rings. Young girls often wear nose rings or lip plugs and both sexes wear beads. The only item which is critical for both men and women is the belt which can be made from anything. It is "considered essential to proper exposure. To be without this belt is to be naked and shameful." [23] Personal art is socially important to all members of the Nuba tribe. It starts at birth when a child is rubbed with oil and continues right through the life of the individual. Both the girls and men oil themselves daily, however, in addition to this men paint the bodies and faces.

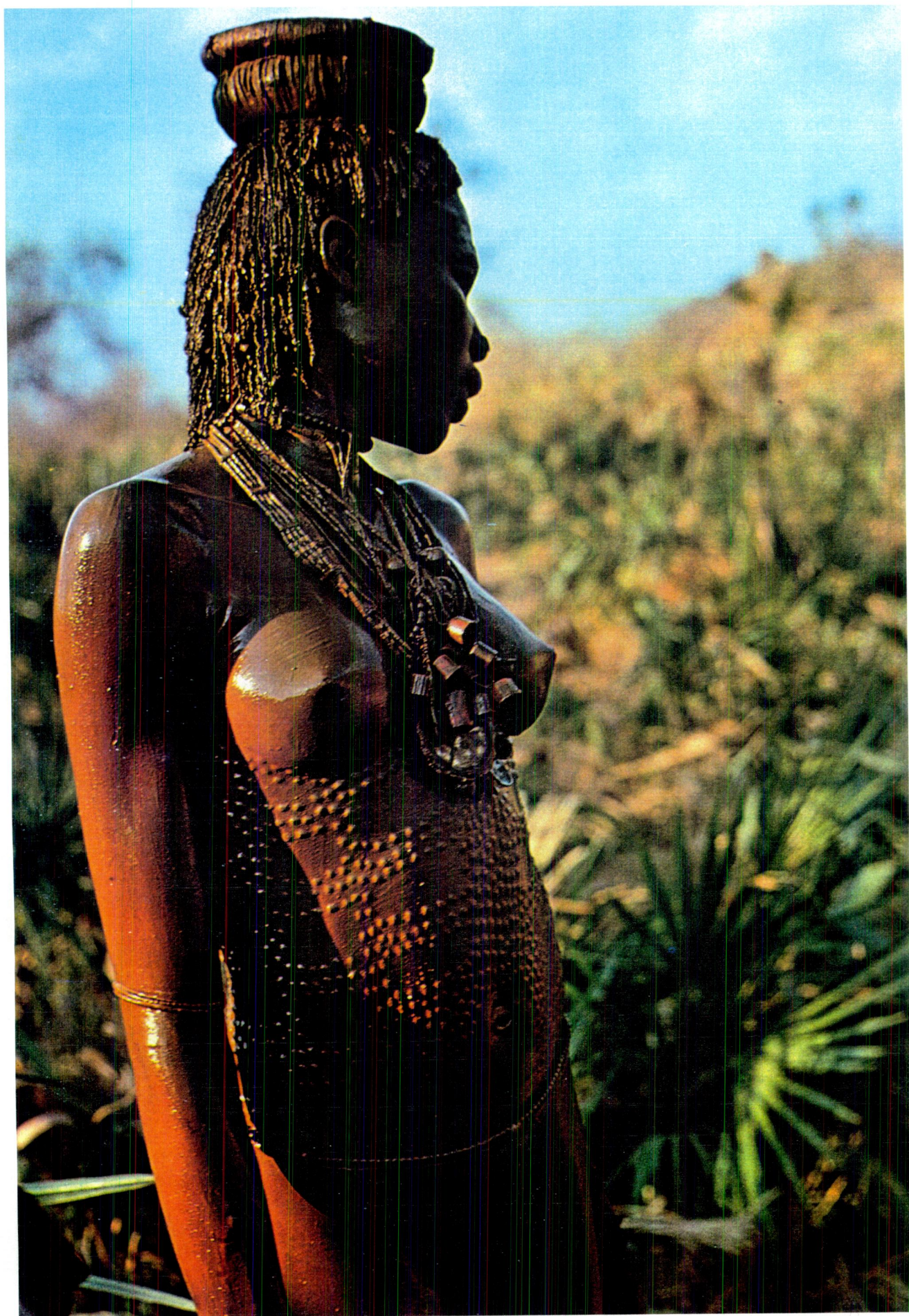
Tattooing is a practice which many races have used for thousands of years, the significance of which varied from race to race. It is usually performed for ritual reasons

but may also fulfil a purely aesthetic function. Among the south east Nuba, only girls tattoo their body. Young men have their face tattooed, but not just for aesthetic reasons. "Cicatrizaton above the eyes is supposed to improve eyesight while cuts flanking the forehead are thought to prevent headaches." [24]

Every girl has to receive a set of tattoos, the first when she is ten or eleven years old. These operations are performed by extremely skilful women. The instruments that they use consist of a very sharp bladed knife and several thorny twigs. (Pl.26) The tattoo artist begins by rubbing oil on to the part of the body she will work on. "Having used her fingers to trace the line of incision on her patients oily exterior, she lifts the skin with her thorny twig and cuts it with the knife. Any blood shed is wiped away with the twig." [25] The more the skin is pulled before cutting, the more raised the resulting scar will be. Not only is this considered more beautiful but will also last a lot longer. When old, a woman's scars are hardly visible. The first tattooing consists of a few cuts under the naval and is performed in the village. The second and third operations are performed high in the rocky hillside where the only spectators allowed are women from her family. The second tattooing takes place shortly after the girls first menstruates. It takes about an hour to tattoo the body and the tattoo artist works with great speed. The girl watches carefully to make sure that the design she wants is correctly made. The tattoo consists of a broad vertical band of incisions stretching from the naval to below the breast. The tattoo artist works without stopping and dusts the wounds with sorghum flour to ease the pain and to protect them from infection. The flour also contain powdered herbs and root extracts which have the effect of making the scars more three-dimensional.

The third and last tattooing is the most painful and happens after the weaning of the first child. There is also a cost involved which is usually paid by the husband. The specialist receives grain, chickens, goats or several litres of oil. This tattooing takes two days to complete. During the first day thousands of tiny incisions are made all over the back, up the neck as far as the hair line and on the upper and lower arms. The next day the hips, legs and buttocks are done. The women try to conceal the pain that they endure. A lot of blood is lost during this operation and many women lose consciousness. The main reason for this scarring tradition centres on beauty. There is also a tradition that if a woman dies without having being scarred, a spirit tattooist will carry out the task using especially large blades and thorns. The demands of beauty however, appear to be more persuasive than supernatural sanctions. The new tattoos on the body render a female Nuba highly attractive to the opposite sex. Nuba women are very proud of the decorative scars. (Pl.27)





PL27

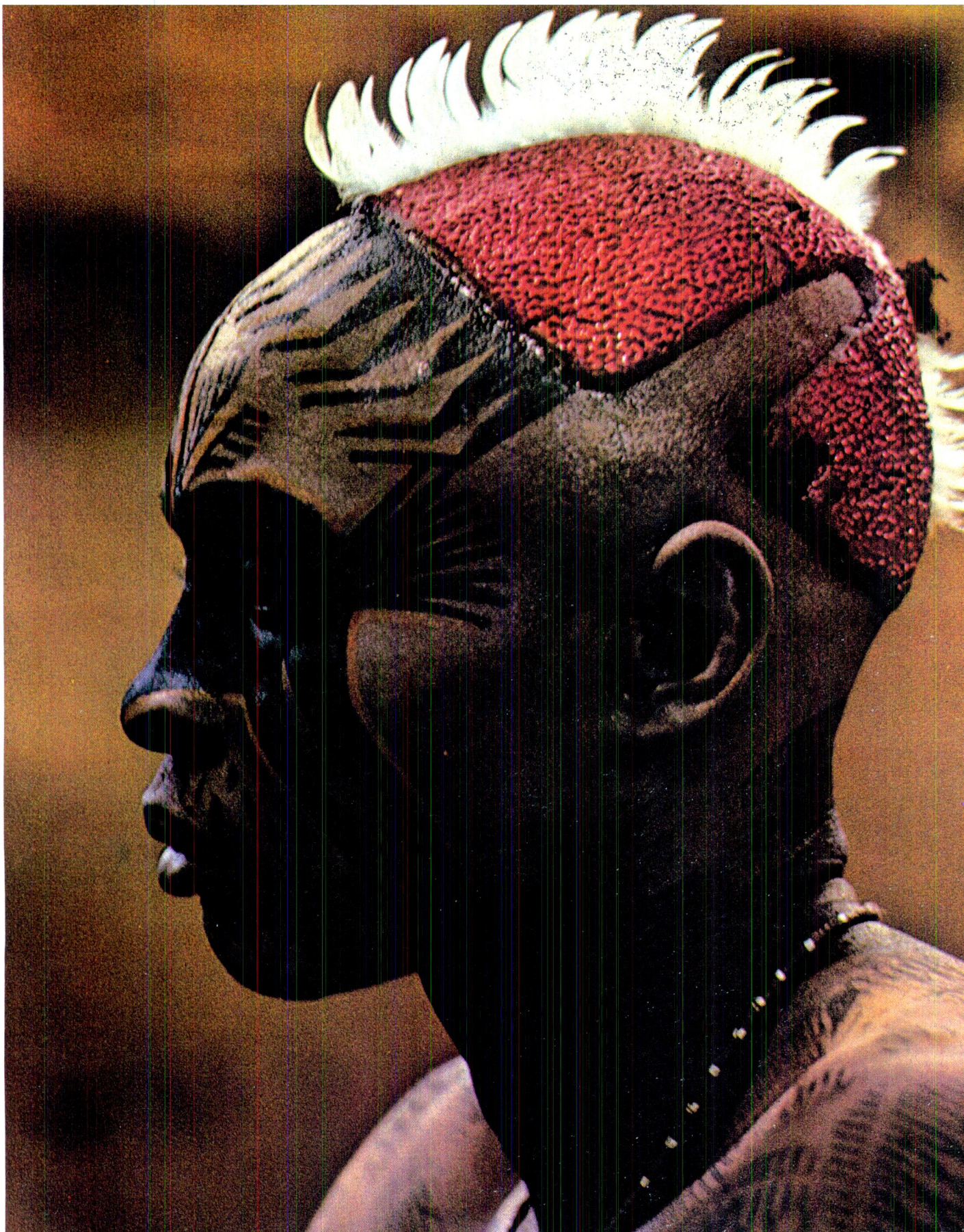
Young Nuba girl, note she has her second set of tattoos

Hair styles are often elaborate. For the girls of the tribe, no hair decoration is used apart from the design of the cut, oil and ochre and the added trinkets. Still however, they do have ritual significance - you can tell the age or social status of someone by their hairstyle. When a girl marries she shaves her head. On becoming pregnant she stops shaving until the baby is born. At menopause all women shave their heads. At other times a woman may wear her hair in a variety of other styles. The essential cut of men's hair is age graded. By the time a male child is eight or nine, he adopts a hair fashion - "essentially a small skull cap, and establish a small tuft of hair on their crown." [26] This tuft which is called the *rum* will stay until elder hood. The male hair style is produced by trimming all around with a knife. The bees' wax is applied and keyed with a small stick to hold the subsequent dusting of powders, red, blue or ochre according to their own personal taste. They then complete their hair by fixing the centre with feathers (usually white) or else with ground nuts. Hair decoration is of course done before body painting because the dusting on of colours might ruin a body design. (Pl.28)

For males, age grading is marked by hair decoration and body painting. There are three main grades. These grades define travel, sport and organised competitive athletics. The first *loer* is characterised by wrestling, the middle grade, *kadundor*, (ref. to Pl.28, Pl.30) by bracelet and stick fighting and the last grade, *kadonga*, by retirement from tribal sports.

The Nuba strongly believe in the power of their amulet. The priests, who decide the time and place for the knife fights, still have a large influence among the Kau Nuba. This is evident by the fact that the fighters, as well as the rest of community wear amulets. For the fighters it must be considered that it increases their strength and stamina. These magical charms are worn mainly on the upper arm, around the neck, waist and above the blades on the fighter's wrists. These amulets are small leather pouches which contain bits of herbs or some Arabic scribbling on a piece of paper. These leather pouches have the power to protect against various things, or to give added strength or power. They protect the wearer from many things ranging from the evil eye to a snake bite.

"Body art was basic to primitive mans social and aesthetic outlook and to his relationship with the natural and supernatural world." [27] The relationship with the natural world can be seen clearly in the case of the people of Kau as it influences their body painting and face masking so much. The supernatural world comes into their art through their use of scarification and the wearing of talismen or amulets as both tribes believe that these charms will protect them from evil spirits.



PL28

Nuba man with a "*Kadundor*" hair style,
the row of chicken feathers have reversed
direction on either side of the "*Rum*"

Chapter Four

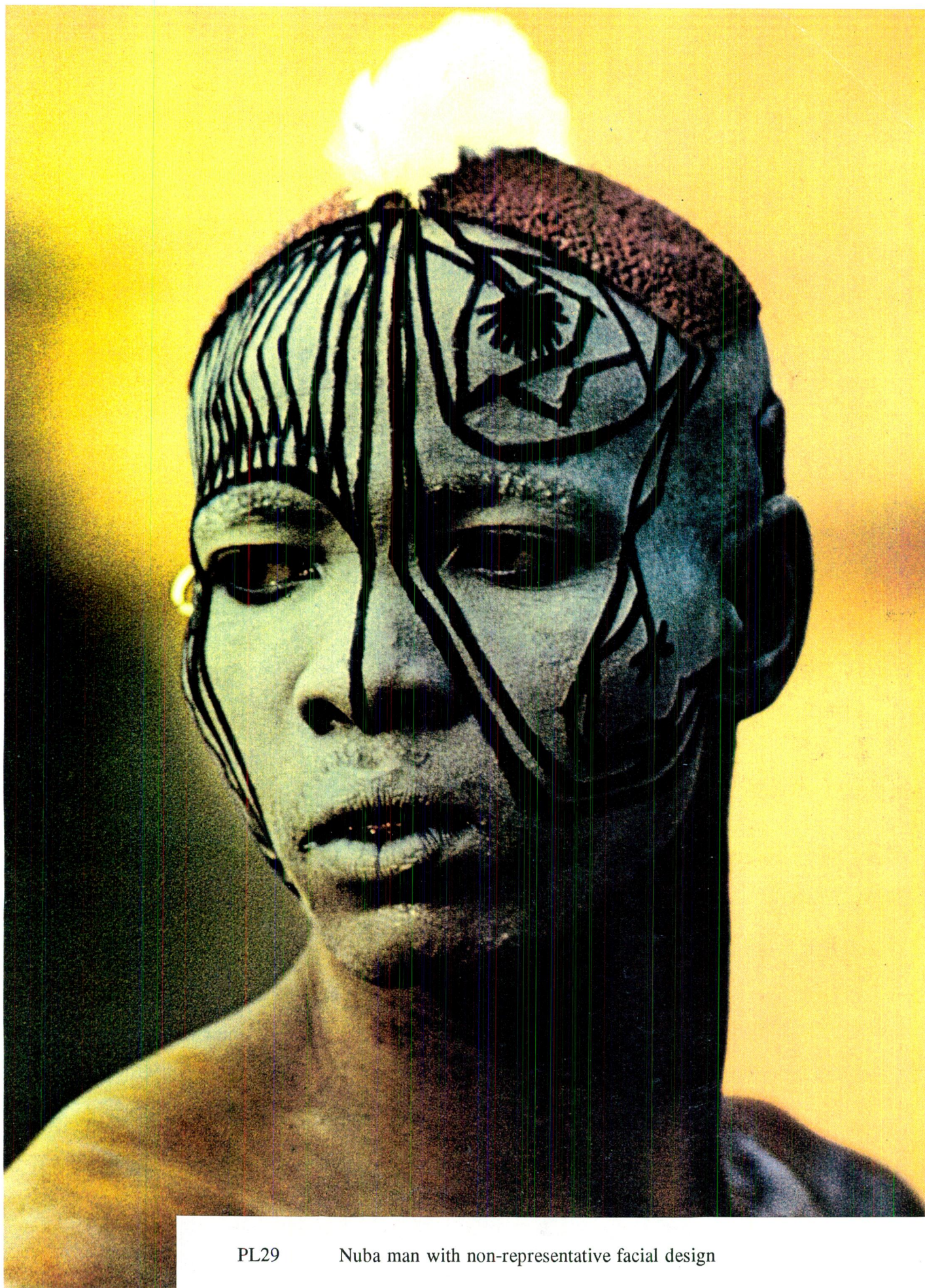
Nuba face and body painting.

In studying the art of the Nuba, their face painting (Pl.29) is deemed more important as an art form than their other daily rituals of oiling and their particular hairstyles. The face painting will therefore be considered in greater depth. In celebrating the health and natural beauty of their bodies they themselves have become an art form. The three Nuba tribes being dealt with here differ from their geographically removed cousins as these others confine their body colouring to ash or small amounts of ochre and to occasions of ritual, sport or dance. The Kau, Nyaro and Fungor however, adorn and paint their bodies daily. These tribes have developed and perfected their art to a much greater extent. They have developed a vast knowledge of the flora and fauna in their environment as a result of their hunter gatherer lifestyle. Even from a very young age children can identify and name all the species of plant and animal life they encounter on a daily basis.

Thus their chief stimulus in design (particularly in representational forms) is their perception of their surroundings. No distinction is made between representational design and "pure" design forms. The sole purpose of body painting is to complement and enhance the body's features as opposed to the aesthetic merits of the design itself. No design or artistic treatment can be made to detract from the body. "The chief reason, after all, for the personal art rests in the proper culture exposure and celebration of the healthy body." [28] As with most other art forms however there is an element of aestheticism.

Though the body decoration does follow strict social rules it also allows freedom of expression and for artistic expression. Decoration commonly serves as a status indicator, the colour a fighter has chosen, the type of hairstyle a young man sports, the amount of scarification marks on a girl's body can indicate her age and in the case of the fighter his competence in the knife fights.

The decorated body is valued as an aesthetic object, and its design is only a means to that end. A distinct feature of the Nuba's personalised art is that they do not identify their personalities or mannerisms with those of the animals they occasionally draw on their bodies. For example a Nuba might adorn his body with a leopard skin pattern, paint the image of a giraffe on his back or make the design on his face similar to that of an ostrich. (Pl.30) However, this does not imply that he wishes to make any connection between himself and the character of the leopard, giraffe or ostrich. Rather, the images and patterns he uses give him pleasure and in his estimation enhance his



PL29

Nuba man with non-representative facial design



PL30

Nuba man with "*Toma*" body design representing a leopard and with "*Kadundor*" hair style and representative facial design of a giraffe on his right hand side

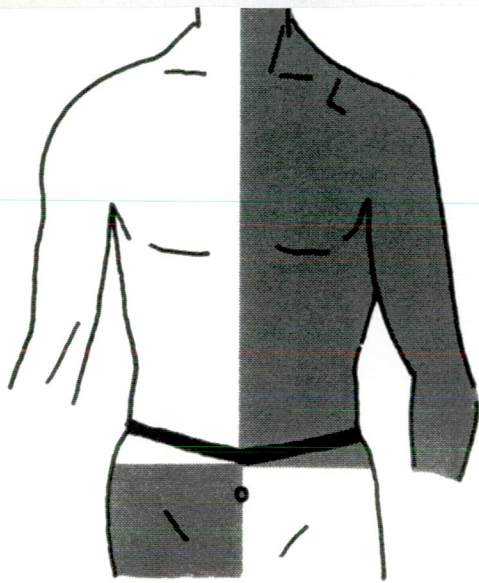
the images and patterns he uses give him pleasure and in his estimation enhance his appearance. The practice of the Nuba is to accentuate the beauty of the body and this constitutes their only art form. "As a symbol, the body represents perfect beauty and is their medium of aesthetic appreciation." [29]

The raw materials for the pigments with which they paint their bodies are found near the village. Black pigments are obtained from powdered charcoal, white from contrite shells. There are underground caves near the village which contain relatively soft stone. From this they obtain yellow ochre and by burning it they obtain a red colour. In recent years they have obtained a new colour, blue, from passing Arab traders, with whom they also barter for mirrors.

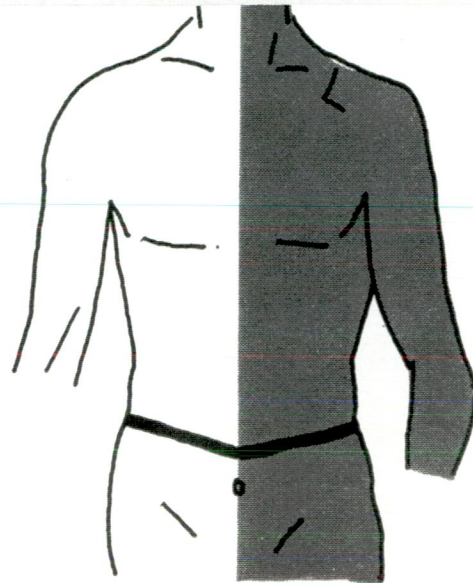
The men must always oil themselves before applying the pigments as the paint will not adhere to the body otherwise. The ground pigments are applied with the hands until the surface of the skin is coated. Lines and patterns are then drawn on the face and body with a small stick, usually using a black colour. Some of the men fashion stamps out of leather or wood and then use them to imprint their bodies with the design. They work in small groups, continuing the designs on each others backs. This was also the case for the face. However, now that they have acquired mirrors, facial work is carried out by each individual. This has led to heightened competition in facial design as each male member of the tribe is responsible for his own face painting.

"The natural symmetry of the body, both in vertical bilateral symmetry and the balance of the horizontal arrangements of parts, are relevant variables in style, form and aesthetics of south eastern Nuba personalised art." [30] There are five basic design types; Tore, Nyulan, Pacore, Toma and Kobera [see foot note 3]. (Pl.31) All body designs are variations of these five designs. In looking at the last two, it is very clear as to how nature and their environment influence their art by providing a myriad of flora and fauna "whose shapes morphology can be identified and represented in two dimensions as sources of artistic expression." [31]

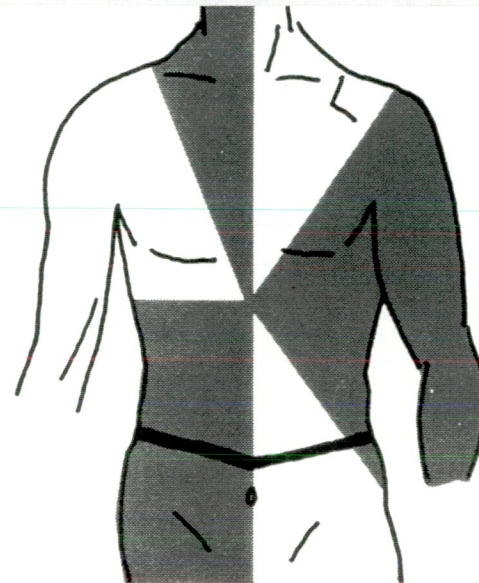
These designs are both representational and non-representational. These design types relate to the symmetry and structure of the body. When representing an animal on the human, the animal may be simplified into geometric shapes and drawn directly onto the body or the animal shape may simply be made appropriate to the human form, by rearranging the shapes. "The animal representations are 'humanised', i.e. the morphology is adjusted to correspond to what it might be were it a man." [32] Sometimes by taking certain camouflage characteristics of an animal and adorning



a



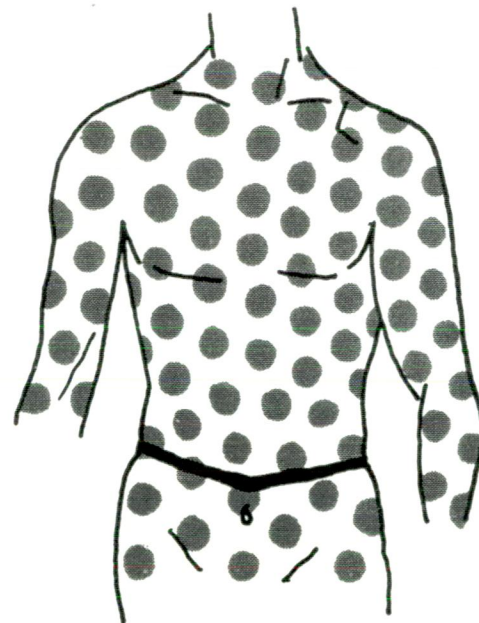
b



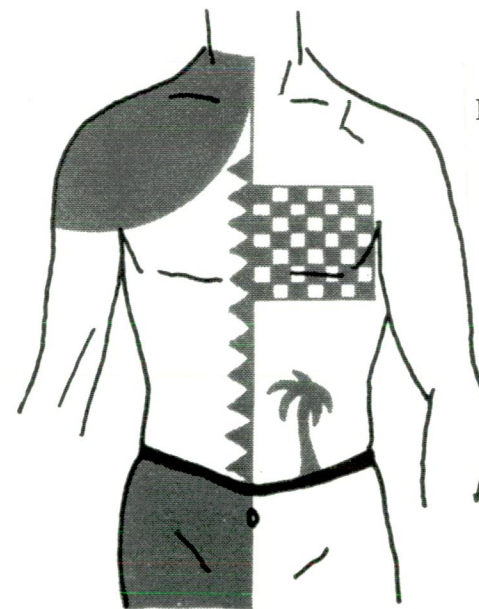
c



d



e



f

PL31

Five design types

A and B: Tore, C: Nyulan,

D: Palcore, E: Toma, F: Kobera

with these characteristics, such as the spots of a leopard, they paint either parts of their bodies or their entire body in spots.

For example, when representing a hyena, yellow spots are applied to a black background. On the hyena spots are only found on its back. Since they can not decorate their own back - they may apply yellow spots on a black background anywhere on their bodies and this will be considered as representing the hyena. When representing animals, they often relate the design to their own body by letting the wing of a bird be their eye on a facial design, their shoulder blade might be the back of a turtle, or the contours of the chest may become a third dimension in illustrating the horns of an antelope.

If a design takes up only a small portion of the body, the rest of the body may be used for unrelated designs. Therefore two different animals can be represented on the body at one time, or the body may have both representational and non-representational designs at once. This is popular with regard to face and body designs, one being representational, the other having geometric designs. Cultural/aesthetic style is very important in regard to both representational and non-representational designs. It is often the case that even though a design may be representing an animal of some sort, this meaning will be irrelevant to the viewer. For example, if a youth covers his body in spots representing a giraffe, while another youth covers his body in meaningless stamped designs, using the same size, shapes and colour contrasts, then the overall effect may be the same. (Pl.32; Pl.33)"Representational art is in essence non-representative, for 'subject' becomes 'styles', and their representation is not so important as the celebration and decoration of the medium, the body."[33]

Balance and symmetry are very important in looking at facial designs. The nasal dip is commonly used in non-representational designs, this being "nyulan" design type.(Pl.34) Hairstyles often play a part in facial designs, often the designs on the face extend onto the shaved "kadundor" strips. (Pl.35) These strips point to a location on the back of the skull which in conjunction with the nasal dip form the most important loci or orientation points for radiating facial designs. The colour "weight" problem is considered in both the facial and body designs, (brighter shades being "lighter" in weight than darker ones). To achieve balance in a whole torso body design, the youth may alternate light and dark colours on either side of the body. If, however, one entire half of the body is in a single colour, the other half in another - a geometric design is often added to the lighter side to balance the viewer's attention.





PL33 Nuba man with non-representative facial and stamped body design





PL34

Nuba man with facial design radiating from the nasal dip and with an ostrich plume attached to "*Rum*"





PL35

Nuba man with symmetrical facial design in black and red on white, note the use of eyes, mouth, nasal dip and "*Kadundor*" strip in the facial design

Conclusion

"Tribal man is and conceives himself to be a part of nature, subject to its vicissitudes and its bounteous opportunities, civilised man is the adversary of nature, predestined, he believes, to be its master, and to confine it in national parks for the recuperation of the alienated. Since artists have at all times been inspired by nature, it seems to follow that, whereas the classical art of the tribal artist is accepted by his society, the romantic civilised artist pursuing his private vision is generally at odds with this - unless, indeed, like some that we could name, it is art itself that he is revolting against." [34]

For both the Nuba and the Wodaabe, the main reason they have been able to preserve their traditions, art forms and culture is because they have lived in relative isolation and have resisted outside influences. However, their encounters with less primitive societies through trading, studies, etc. have resulted in certain changes. One can only assume that this will increase and soon destroy their wonderful culture just as it has done to neighbouring tribes.

The West African Savannah, is the home of a large group of people called Fulani, who were all herders until the fifteenth century. Originally they probably came from the Upper Nile, they moved in search of pasture lands. On reaching Nigeria, many settled down as farmers or traders. Many of these Fulani retained their cattle, but employed herders to tend them, therefore their cattle became a symbol of wealth and status rather than forming the basis of a way of life. A smaller amount of the Fulani remained nomadic calling themselves Wodaabe. They value their freedom and despise their settled neighbours have resisted where possible all outside influence and cultural change. The Wodaabe are the last of the Fulani who have held on to their traditions, but one wonders for how much longer, since this area lies at the heart of the trade routes that link North and West Africa, where there is a constant exchange of ideas and artefacts between travelling merchants and the local people.

In January of 1974, Leni Riefenstahl revisited the Nuba tribes, it was five years after her last visit, and when she returned to their villages she was very disheartened because in those five years they had changed so much. There had been a succession of bad harvests, which had forced the migration of the young men to neighbouring towns for employment. After working in these towns for a year they returned with clothes and money as well as introducing a range of foreign diseases. The influence of clothing is particularly significant in a culture based on nakedness and the adornment of the naked

body. Similarly the introduction of money into what was originally a barter system has brought with it theft, formerly alien to their society.

These Nuba were known as the Mesakin Quissayr Nuba and live about 125 miles from the Nuba of Kau who I have discussed earlier. A book was published by Ms. Riejenstahl in 1976 telling of how these Mesakin Quissayr Nuba had lost their old traditions because of outside influence. We can only speculate on how much longer it will take the rest of the Nuba to abandon their culture. In her observations Leni Reifensahl also mentions that, while in the camp in Kau, tourists had come to visit them and offered them money in order to be allowed to photograph them. These are the sorts of outside influences that begin the destruction of their beautiful traditions. They who have managed to live in isolation until the studies of anthropologists such as J. C. Faris and Leni Riefensahl have now been brought to the attention of the Western Academia who may in turn initiate further studies. Each contact with our "less primitive society" erodes their society which would otherwise be self-sustainable. The same applies to the Wodaabe of Niger as they consider it an honour to receive a guest and are a very hospitable people. The consequence of this has been to leave themselves open to the trappings of Western civilisation and lead to inevitable destruction for their society. The benefit of Western anthropologists infiltrating their communities has been to bring their art to our attention.

"When the artists of Europe first 'discovered' African art in the anthropological collections of European museums, they saw in it a freedom from the narrow traditions of naturalism or realism against which they themselves were rebelling. By psychological projection they and the art critics of the time found freedom from conventional rules and stylistic limitations which they themselves had been attempting to achieve." [35]

[see footnote 4]

Another factor which has brought outside influences into both these tribes is trade. The Wodaabe of Niger collect and buy objects at the market place and incorporate into their art. "...with a real feeling for style, a love of outlandish fashion and a great sense of fun, young Wodaabe men and women search for objects in the market place with which they can create new and exciting ornaments. They incorporate odds and ends into their traditional festive attire that they feel will make them look even more stunning." [36]. Being attracted by their colour they change everyday objects by Western standards into part of their costumes and art forms. Items such as suitcases, books, imitation gem

stones, small torch bulbs, shiny objects such as zippers and locks, watch bands, spent gun cartridges and even toy guns. These are all incorporated into their costumes as pendants, or hair pieces, or they are attached to their head dresses, belts or panels of embroidery. They also obtain umbrellas and sun glasses at these markets. The Nuba tribe trade with the Arabs in the surrounding countryside. They buy oil, beads, a blue pigment used in their face masking and hairstyles and also mirrors. This trading had already been established by 1974, and one can only presume that this trading will continue to grow in future years - thus giving the tribe a link with and therefore influences from the outside world.

Other influences, such as Islamisation was encouraged on independence, but the effect has been slight according to J. C. Faris. However he does mention that a few rural Koranic schools had been established in the region. "Islam has made inroads in local society in less formal ways, however, and will undoubtedly mean the demise of the personal art tradition in the future." [37]. Another problem in relation to holding on to age-old traditions is tourism. This is less common but becoming more prevalent. One of the problems with tourism is photographic exploitation. "When apparently innocent snapshots, agreed to in good faith, reappear as postcards on sale in the local market, it is hardly surprising that people feel anger and resentment." [38]

African Government officials usually regard their traditional culture and in particular their unique art, which we in the West value so highly, as "primitive" and shameful, and as a result often do not want it to be recorded or revealed. This occurs to such an extent that visiting anthropologists have been arrested and expelled from the country. Some African governments also discourage nudity, scarification and other forms of permanent adornment among tribes. They have succeeded in certain parts of Africa and as a result ancient customs, traditions and art forms are dying out fast. An example of this is the law in Tanzania which enforces members of the Masai tribe to wear trousers, in their case "Modernisation means trousers." [39]

As Christianity and Islam continue to challenge traditional beliefs all over Africa, the wonderful variety of form of symbolic jewellery is steadily being replaced by pendants with Christian crosses or containers holding verses from the Koran. One way for these tribes to preserve their art traditions is if they are able to select from new materials and ideas found in the market place, and "transform them into innovative and unique art forms, clearly reflecting their own beliefs and sense of style." [40]

The Wodaabe tribe have achieved this to a certain degree as they combine both their own traditional art forms with new materials and objects found at the market. It is "their loyalty to time honoured custom and their reluctance to change that makes it possible for them to borrow from the outside world rather than be swamped by it,"[41] that has preserved the Wodaabe tradition, one can only hope that this continues rather than their following in their neighbours footsteps and adopting Western influences. In commenting on other long term effects on their culture caused by external influences and contacts, the emergence of Western diseases is a significant factor. Common illnesses such as measles can have a devastating effect. More recently concern has been voiced at the rapid spread of the H.I.V. virus. Uganda for example is quoting figures as high as 80% of the population as sufferers. Considering their cultural promiscuity one can imagine A.I.D.S. spreading like wildfire amongst the Nuba and Wodaabe. Unless measures are taken to curb the onslaught of A.I.D.S. the total elimination of the tribes could be envisaged in a relatively short period of time.

In examining both these tribes, their lifestyles and particular aspects of their cultures have been discussed. This is necessary in order to understand their art-forms. The festivals and celebrations in which they participate are primarily important in relation not only to their personal adornment but also as art-forms in their own right. To understand their art it is also necessary to know their beauty ideas, knowing these three factors, that is, the concept of beauty, the celebrations and festivals which are central to their society and the day to day living of each tribe, one can then appreciate their art to a greater degree. "Body decoration in some societies is the most important of the arts, and in many cases may justly be termed a fine art."[42]

Also examined is the sad fact, that like many other primitive tribes in Africa, they too are slowly losing their precious culture. At the moment they are holding onto their past but it will become more and more difficult as time goes on, and as their inevitable curiosity with the West increases. It has been fascinating to study the art of the Wodaabe and the Nuba and one cannot but be impressed by the extraordinary culture and art forms of both tribes.

Footnote 1:

The Democratic Republic of Sudan is the largest African nation. It is bounded on the north by Egypt, on the east by the Red Sea and Ethiopia, on the south by Kenya, Uganda and Zaire and on the west by The Central African Republic and Chad and on the northwest by Libya. It's total area is 967,491 sq. miles, however the population is small in relation to the country's size at 16.5 million. Khartoum is the national capital. The Sudan is home to Arabs in the north and black Africans in the south. It's economy is based on pastoralism and subsistence agriculture. The country has been plagued with political instability since its independence in 1956 and has no formal constitution.

Rural settlement is invariably clustered because of water supply problems. Towns are few and widely scattered, only 10% of the settlements can be considered urban. In northern Sudan Arabic culture predominates, however throughout Sudan there are other ethnic groups; the Nubians, the Beja and the black Funj, Nuba and the tribes of the Darfur regions.

Of the black northern peoples, the funj live on either side of the Blue Nile upstream of Sannar, the Nuba are found in Kordofan and the Fur, Daju, Beigo, Masalit, Gurniro and Tawa occupy Central Darfur Province.

The Sudan is part of both Arab and black Africa and has a dual cultural heritage. Although denied by the government, it is believed that Islam and Arabic will be forced on the Southern tribes in a drive to create a wholly Arab state. If this can be circumvented by the formation of a semi-independent southern Region, it would be possible to create a nation in which both cultural traditions thrive.

Footnote 2:

The Republic of Niger has an area of 458,075 sq. miles and a population of more than 4.2 million. It is bounded on the northwest by Algeria, on the northeast by Libya, on the east by Chad, on the south by Nigeria and on the west by Upper Volta. The capital city is Niamey which is situated on the Niger river. It is the tenth largest country in Africa and is sparsely populated. The majority of its people are Muslim. The country obtained its independence in 1960, after 50 years of French rule and Hamani Diori has been president since independence.

Rainfall increases southward so that the country is divided into three zones; desert in the north, an intermediate zone, where nomadic pastoralists raise cattle and a cultivated

zone in the south, where the greater part of the population both nomadic and settled is concentrated.

Only about 8% of the population are town dwellers. The rural population is divided into nomads and sedentary peoples. There are two main groups of nomads; the Fulani and Fare who travel northwards in winter and gain subsistence from their livestock. However, there is a tendency amongst the nomads to settle down.

Although Islam, being the main religion, has a predominant influence, pre-Islamic cultural traditions are also strong. Paradoxically, the numerous ethnic strains in Niger have resulted in a strengthening of the fabric of national life. Since independence greater interest has been shown in the country's cultural heritage in particular with respect to traditional handicrafts, dances and music.

Footnote 3:

There are five basic designs in the Nuba body painting and face masking.

1. Tore: design oriented about a vertical division along axis of bilateral symmetry.
2. Nyulan: design which radiates from a single point along the axis of bilateral symmetry.
3. Pacore: design which divides the body or face into many parallel sections, vertically, horizontally or diagonally.
4. Toma: uniform distribution of stamped or spotted design. Toma is also a species of rock hawk, with a spotted breast.
5. Kobera: Non-uniform distribution of different individual designs, particularly panels of design. Kobera is also a generic term for butterflies and some moths.

Footnote 4:

"Primitivism in 20th century Art" was an exhibition shown at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Dallas Museum of Art in 1984. This exhibition looks at how modern art was influenced by tribal art.

"That many today consider tribal sculpture to represent a major aspect of world art, that fine arts museums are increasingly devoting galleries, even entire wings to it, is a triumph of vanguard art itself. We owe to the voyagers, colonials and anthropologists the arrival of these objects in the west. But we owe primarily to the convictions of the

pioneer modern artists their promotion from the rank of curiosities and artefacts to that of major art, indeed to the status of art at all."

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