

***Karuwa* – 'free women' in Manga (Eastern Niger).**

The *karuwa* institution: women's alternative to marriage in Eastern Niger.

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Preface

This is a study about Kanuri women in Eastern Niger, written in 1973. It is a collaborative work between Mette Bovin and myself, published in Danish in Copenhagen, Denmark, 1975. The material on women's careers in the two villages, Mainé Soroa and Garawa reveals an apparent contradiction between instable marriages, an increasing number of 'free women' combining incomes and gifts from lovers and petty trade on the one side and the very strict Muslim ideals for married women's behaviour on the other. The analysis of the material shows the forms of life which lie behind the apparent contradiction and how contrasts are generated and integrated by people in their every day lives.

Although the entire fieldwork was carried out in present Republic of Niger, the title of this study should also include Borno in present Federal Republic of Nigeria. Manga, where Mainé and Garawa are located, had been part of Kanem-Borno Empire for centuries up to the colonial partition in 1901 (Maïkorema 1985:142). Moreover, both villages lie just on the other bank of *Komadugu* Yobe (the present boundary), a score of kilometres from Geidam and the site of Birnin Gazargamo, the former imperial capital. More significantly still *karuwa* – an institution generated through urbanisation – undoubtedly originated from within Borno as its Kanuri equivalent *kárwa* suggests. We are not aware of any study of it in Nigeria. Our modest contribution might then possibly become the only testimony of a disappearing, ancient and original African institution.

This first publication in English is a literal translation of the original book. Publishing a twenty-five-year-old, unmodified manuscript needs its explanation:

Firstly, inspite of great efforts we did not manage to get the necessary funding to translate the book neither into neither English nor French. When we eventually were able to have the *ms* translated into English and French in 1988 and our friend and close colleague Suzanne Bernus had taken on the task to publish it, she was killed in a car accident in Mali.

It has been a very painful experience, not to be 'allowed' to give the inhabitants of Niger access to our work. Our pleasure today is, however, caused by the fact that it is now getting increasingly accepted that the production of knowledge should be based on dialogue. Not only because of the ethics of research but also because dialogue-based research increases its quality.

Secondly, Mette and I have tried, but not succeeded, to conduct a follow-up study in Mainé Soroa and Garawa. For various reasons – political, closed frontiers between Nigeria and Niger, and health – our effort has not been crowned with success. Since we have not done further fieldwork, we find it better to publish the *ms* in its original form.

Since 1973, we have both continued our research work on women and gender relations. Mette Bovin has studied Kanuri women in Damaturu, the capital of Yobe State, Nigeria, and survival strategies of the Wodaabe people in Northern Nigeria and Eastern Niger. I have studied urbanisation and transformation of gender roles in two fishing villages in Northern Norway and since 1982, urbanisation and transformation of gender roles in Ngaundere town, Adamawa Province, Cameroon. We have both of us used photos in our research work and produced films about women in the societies where we work (Bovin 1979; Holtedahl 1975, 1987, 1988).

In our later works, we have acquired more profound insight into the subtleties of anthropological analysis and much richer insights into the societies in which we have been working. Our progressive acquisition of local languages has played an important role.

It needs to be said, however, that to our knowledge from the neighbouring regions up to date, women's lives and careers more confirm than contradict the pattern of women's lives as we have described and found in the late 1960s and beginning of the 1970s in Eastern Niger. Our later studies of women in urban Muslim Northern Nigeria and Northern Cameroon reveal that women's lives in these areas are also characterised by brittle marriages, increasing difficulties in husband-wife relations, increasing marginalisation of women's influence locally and nationally (Bovin 1983, 1991; Holtedahl 1993b, 1997). The main difference we see in these areas today – a difference, which might quite likely be found in today's Eastern Niger – is most probably caused by the more violent urbanisation processes and increased schooling. Women's knowledge is increasingly marginalised without it being compensated by new competence. Women's position in relation to men's is weaker. A few Muslim women have had access to higher education in recent years, something, which apparently has reduced their attraction as wives for educated men.

In Ngaundere of the 1980s and 1990s, we find the same female career pattern: many 'free women', *karuwai*, find strong *magada* (pl., *magajiya* sing.) who are protecting them. The *karuwai* entertain at important political events and in spite of official Muslim Sharia rules for adult women's behaviour, the *karuwa* institution is important and gives a certain power in the negotiation *vis-à-vis* husbands because of their fear that too many wives might leave them. This would reduce their social rank. But the town of Ngaundere has a highly differentiated society and the forms vary much from high class Fulani people to newly arrived people from the countryside. The ways women can accumulate control and eventually some little freedom also varies considerably (Holtedahl 1993b). I am tempted to say that the women in the upper class Muslim society are more restricted in their possibilities to influence their own lives than in the lower classes – as concerns their relation to men.

My material of this study is based on my very first research study, which also resulted in a Ph D thesis (Holtedahl 1973). My experiences from this first study have taught me research strategies, which I have followed ever since in my life as an anthropologist (Holtedahl 1993a)

With all modesty do I reflect about my possibilities of acquiring insight into other people's perspectives. It took, for instance, a long time for me to really understand that feelings of love between men and women could be expressed differently from what I had learnt. My internalised Protestant perspective taught me that "where there is money, there is no love". The fact that the married women in Eastern Niger as well as the *karuwai* were constantly preoccupied with gifts and money their husbands and lovers respectively gave or did not give them, made me initially believe that they were "more interested in money than in love". In fact, this made me doubt whether love existed at all. In my childhood's bourgeois society of Copenhagen, the expression

of absence of interest in material goods and money was metonymically related to the expression of love and tenderness. A wife's dignity lied in her love and caring for husband and children and in the total lack of interest in remuneration. I think this was one cultural code that I carried within me and which it was most difficult to break. The very hard work to overcome my own cultural code and to try to analyse and understand Manga women's lives, taught me even more about the cultural conditioning of my own life as a woman in a period of societal change.

In this first study, I took many pictures, I shot a film (1975), I intended to make ethnographic exhibitions in Scandinavian museums (1971), and I planned to make films about Manga women to be shown in Niger. These intentions soon became revelations to me from a methodological point of view. The fact that I intended to communicate to a large, popular audience and with images, films and objects, made me work hard on what I now call, cultural dialogue. In order to be sure that I had captured the local, cultural categories properly before I left Niger, I showed the photos to the local people and explained to them what I thought was happening. There were always aspects to the events that I had not understood or things I did not see. I learned to distinguish what was codified physical behaviour for men and women and what was not. When I wanted to buy the clothes that were worn by Kanuri, Hausa, and Fulani women, by married and unmarried women, it was at this moment that I really started listening and learning about local systems of values and the codified and metonymic connections that were currently developed in this poly-ethnic society. And this was of great importance to me as a novice in anthropological research. I went to the local cloth trader in the market, pointed at the cloth I thought was typical for married Kanuri women's dresses. The trader told me that a Kanuri woman would not buy that cloth. Most of his clients were *karuwai*. But he willingly pointed out to me where to go and buy the married Kanuri women's cloth and where to purchase the ones that Fulani women would choose. At the tailor's I was told that I did not know the distinction between styles used by Fulani women and by Kanuri women.

My effort to use objects and images to communicate about the society of Mainé Soroa turned out to be an extremely useful means of checking my acquisition of local knowledge. In addition, I discovered that the fact that I showed pictures, bought things, and discussed what I thought I had understood with people, had a very positive effect. They seemed to feel that they participated in a new project, which they found interesting.

Today I can say that then the importance of this dialogue and opinions, for human as well as academic reasons, was not recognised at home. The whole research system focused on the promotion of Scandinavian careers within cultural studies. Neither the epistemological nor the political importance of ensuring continued dialogue between researchers and the society of their study were recognised. It is the African countries that have started insisting on western researchers' contribution to local competence development in exchange for research permits.

My experience, however, of the enriching effect of giving something back, of using visual tools and not only explaining my presence and work orally, has ever since inspired me in my approach to anthropological research (Holtedahl 1987, 1988). Fortunately, I have been able not only to systematise scientifically the use of visual materials in anthropological research but also to prove the political and academic importance of collaboration and dialogue as basis for anthropological research. This is due to the generous financial contribution from the Norwegian authorities to the Ngaundere-Anthropos programme, which, since 1992, has had the possibility to promote collaboration between researchers from the North – the University of Tromsø – and the South – the University of Ngaundere – in the pursuit of knowledge and competence in Northern Cameroon. This programme has allowed us to enlarge our contacts through students and colleagues at the University of Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria.

I, herewith, want to express my profound gratitude to Prof. Eldridge Mohammadou who also, long time ago, did fieldwork in Maïné Soroa, and as the father of this programme, for close collaboration and strong support in the construction of the Anthropos programme. Also all my warm thanks to the publisher, Ms. Gisela Seidensticker-Brikay, for her encouragement and insistence on publishing this study and not less for her very big help in the editing. To see the study published in Borno State appears like the symbolic expression of the fact that the policy of academics has finally changed into the right direction. That we have found the way to go we just insist on following it.

Warm thanks also to Mette Bovin for a wonderful collaborative experience and for her permission to publish the translation of the book after so many years.

A very special expression of our debt we owe to late Suzanne Bernus without who this study might never have been read by other than Scandinavians. We want to express our deep gratitude to all women in Borno, in Niger, and in Adamawa of Cameroon who never ceased to collaborate generously with us. Some of them are now carrying out research on their own societies, writing books about women, and teaching the young generation the art of cultural studies.

Lisbet Holtedahl
Ngaundere, 2nd June 1999

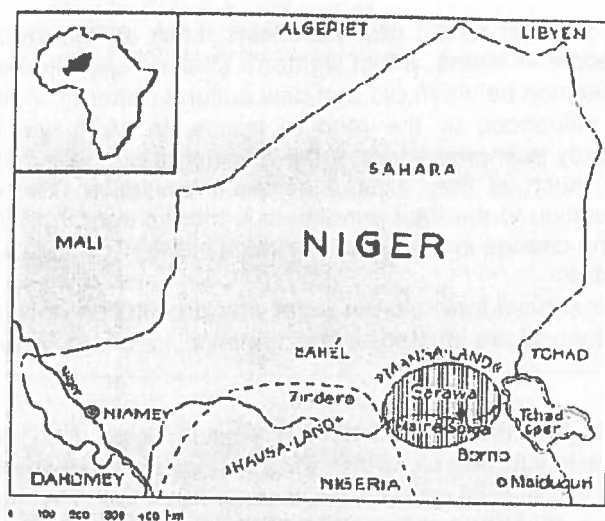
- Verse 32. "O wives of the prophet, you are not like any other women. If you would keep your duty, be not soft in speech, lest he in whose heart is a disease yearn; and speak a word of goodness."
- Verse 33. "And stay in your house and display not your beauty [...]; and keep up prayer, and pay the poor-rate and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah only desires to take away uncleanness from you, O people of the household." (*The Holy Qur'an*, 1963:808)

1. Introduction

Among inhabitants of the ethnically heterogeneous area of Eastern Niger, there are two distinct role positions for adult women. These are (A) married woman, who lives under the authority of her husband and (B) *karuwa* 'independent woman', who may have relations with several men. These two roles are mutually exclusive in that a woman may only have one or the other at any one time. However, women in the Muslim communities of this region may oscillate between these two roles several times in the course of their lives. In this paper, we shall examine the different aspects of these two roles in order to shed light on the reasons for which women may alternate between the two.

The material presented here is based on fieldwork done by two anthropologists. Mette Bovin worked in the village of Garawa (population 400) for ten months in 1968. Lisbet Høltedahl worked in Mainé-Soroa¹ (population 2000) for ten months in 1970. The villages are approximately 20 km apart. Garawa villagers appeared to have had less contact with 'western' institutions and artefacts and were thus more 'traditional' in their outlook and behaviour than the residents of Mainé.

Map I. Manga-land in Niger Republic, the area of research



In Eastern Niger people use hand signs to indicate two different types of relationship between men and women. Moving the upper finger forcefully down into the hook of the lower finger forms sign A. This sign is used to indicate a marriage proposal or to say "I am married" or "s/he is married".

Moving the fingers back and forth, alongside one another make sign B. This sign indicates that the relationship is temporary. It is used to suggest "Disappear with me" or to explain that "this person is a friend of that person and that person".

Both signs were seen in Garawa and Maïné. They were used most often by men but also by women. The signs were used seriously while explaining relationships and positions or while joking as, for instance, when a trader in the market asked a passing girl for sexual favours in a joking manner.

The fact that these two signs exist locally in Niger shows that there is an important difference between these two types of relationships between men and women. It also suggests that there is an important difference between the two roles for women that are involved: married woman, *kamu*, and 'independent woman', *karuwa*.

Other researchers interested in Islamic society have apparently neglected this oscillation between the roles of married and independent woman². Or, perhaps, the situation in Eastern Niger is special in this respect.

It is necessary to examine the two roles for women in this society in terms of the ideals for social prestige and for 'masculinity' and 'femininity' in order to understand the meaning of these alternatives for women in Garawa and Maïné. This will allow us to see the advantages and disadvantages the roles of married woman or independent woman each offer a woman at the different stages in her life cycle. It is through observation of the circumstances under which women choose one or the other role that we can clarify the relationship between the two roles in the society. It is, thus, mainly a study of 'the developmental marriage cycle of the woman' as we could call it.

We will also attempt to determine whether or not new conditions, such as the introduction of school and work possibilities for people in Maïné, affect women's choices and alternatives. The people of Maïné are experiencing tension between old and new cultural patterns, while those of Garawa have, as yet, been little influenced by the modern trends. In 1970, we found that changes in Maïné had resulted mostly in improvement of the role and status alternatives open to **men**. The women's roles were much as they existed before colonisation. The number of *karuwai* (independent women) in relation to the total population is much larger in Maïné than in Garawa. This can be attributed to the change in the labour situation in Maïné and to a change in the way in which *karuwai* are recruited.

Through a comparison between the *karuwa* institution in Niger and prostitution in Denmark, we shall see how virtue, sex, and affluence are related to the feminine ideals in very different

¹ Hereafter called Maïné.

² e.g. Hansen 1961, 1967; Trimmingham 1959; Pehrson 1966. Though R. Cohen, 1971, deals with women in Kanuri society, he mainly focuses on divorce while our focus is mainly on *karuwai* and the *karuwa* institution and its structural opposite, the marriage institution. The two studies seem to supplement one another. We should perhaps also point out that we had **not** read Cohen's book from 1971, when we wrote this paper. We only had Cohen's article from 1961 on marriage stability.

ways in these two cultures. This will show that a prostitute is a deviant in Danish society, but a *karuwa* is not considered deviant in Eastern Niger.

2. The Society and its culture

2.1. Mangaland and its people

Garawa and Maïné are situated in the eastern part of the Republic of Niger, about 200 km west of Lake Chad (map 1) in West Africa's Sahel zone, the dry bush steppe. The rainy season is short: three months and the annual rainfall is around 400 mm (and less these years). The desert, only a few kilometres to the north, is the northern limit of agriculture.

The area is thinly populated and there is no competition for land. Just a tenth of the arable land is cultivated. The area is utilised by a farmer population, the Manga, who are the majority and several nomadic groups, living from their cattle: Fulani, Tubu, and Anagamba (Woufaaŋe). These groups live in a symbiotic relationship based on exchange of millet, the main crop, for cattle products.

Garawa and Mainé lay on a centuries old north-south trade route: cattle and salt are traded southwards, while sugar, cloth and other goods are traded northwards from Kano and other large centres in Northern Nigeria. The weekly markets in Mainé and Garawa have been and still are centres for inter-ethnic communication.

There are many other ethnic groups³ represented in the area, especially in the large market villages the size of Maïné but even in small market villages like Garawa. In addition to agriculture, the majority of the sedentarised population work at one or more additional occupations, such as goat and sheep herding, as local traders or middlemen, long distance traders, religious specialists, or artisans. Some trades are monopolised by particular ethnic groups in Garawa and Maïné. Exclusively the Hausa who are also professional merchants carry on the butchering. Almost all of the water carriers are Dagara. There is an element of ethnic stratification but this has no special consequences for the institutions we shall study. Ethnic identity does not serve as a hindrance in seeking higher positions in Mainé as for example in positions of a political nature or obtaining education. Through such positions, members of different ethnic groups can compete for high status, in the same rank system.

2.2. Historical, political and social organisation of Garawa and Mainé

The Manga are a sub-group of the Kanuri, a linguistic group that today inhabits north-eastern Nigeria and south-eastern Niger. Before colonisation, the Kanuri lived in the Emirate of Bornu, which was a feudal state in the Chad area for 800 – 1000 years⁴.

The sultan, highest political and religious leader of the Kanuri, lived in Kukawa and since 1907 in Maiduguri, the previous and present capital of the Emirate respectively. The Emirate was divided into provinces, which again were divided into smaller areas, having a dominating village as the centre and many satellite villages. Each village had a chief. He was responsible to the

³ Bovin, 1972, pp. 69/70, has registered approximately 20 ethnic groups in the area.

⁴ Cohen, 1967.

province leader, who was responsible to the sultan. As in other Sudanese kingdoms, there was a dividing line between slaves and the free.

Around 1900, the French began colonising the northern part of the Emirate of Bornu where the Manga live. This caused a division of the Emirate between the French and further south, English rule until 1961, independence. But the sultan in Maiduguri in the English part of Bornu is still the highest religious leader for all the Kanuri.

The arrival of the French changed Mainé's economic and social life. Mainé became the administrative centre for the Diffa district. The highest administrator in Mainé is a *souspréfet*. The Mainé *arrondissement* still has a traditional Manga chief, *mai* Katiellu.

One consequence of the new administration in Mainé was the establishment of a new official quarter. Nomads were invited to settle in order to help the administration with tax collection, and settlement of the nomads has since then been taking place. Trading has developed. New institutions have been established: a school, a post office, an agricultural centre, a dispensary, a meteorological station, a *gendarmérie*, a jail, and lastly a bar in 1968. These new institutions have, among other things, carried with them an increased status differentiation as well as an increasing ethnic complexity, along with a general increase in population in Mainé. Most of the officials are still Djerma and Hausa from the capital area of Western Niger.

Colonisation has had no deep influence on the life of Garawa. The only new institutions are an annual tax collection and a weekly market tax. In addition, the recruitment of a few boys from Garawa to the boarding school in Mainé had just begun in 1968. Garawa has two village chiefs who are responsible for tax collection, documentation of certain internal cases, and the representation of the village outwardly, especially with the authorities in Mainé. There is Garawa Yalla (north) and Garawa Anum (south).

The history of Garawa and Mainé is reflected in the settlement pattern. In terms of geographical ethnic segregation, Garawa is a structural miniature of Mainé. Thus, in both places we find

- a common market place
- a pure Manga quarter (mainly with farmers)
- an ethnically heterogeneous quarter (where those engaged in special occupations, such as butchers and water bearers, live).

Mainé has a third quarter where officials and Europeans reside. The social status differences are also larger in Mainé than in Garawa. Most people in Mainé live in round straw huts. Those people who are a little richer have square mud houses while the higher officials live in cement houses.

In Garawa, almost everyone lives in round straw huts. Only four mud houses can be found in the village. These are occupied by village chief and by farmers who are also very active traders. No Europeans live in Garawa.

It is important to stress that, even though the subject of our study concerns ethnically heterogeneous societies, we have found common codes and ideals among the various ethnic groups in Mainé and Garawa. The common means of communication are created through religion, Islam, and language, the *lingua franca*, Hausa. Men and women from the various ethnic

groups agree on the criteria, which must be fulfilled in order to achieve a certain position in a common hierarchy. These criteria are based on traditional and new idioms.

Besides the common codes and ideals about masculinity, femininity, and rank, further ideals exist that are expressive of cultural characteristics for the different ethnic groups. This is especially true of the women and is shown in external signs: dress, hairstyle, jewellery etc. which differs between Manga, Hausa, Fulani etc. Men's garments show no marked ethnic differences. The differences reflect social rank.

The Anagamba are non-Muslim nomads herding cattle in the Maïné – Garawa area but they do not participate in the hierarchy and no Anagamba woman is a *karuwa*, and Anagamba men do not frequent *karuwai*.

2.3. Islam and ideal behaviour

Islam came to Kanem-Bornu approx. 1100 A.D. but it was many centuries before the new religion became an integrated part of the villagers' life. The people in Maïné and Garawa consider themselves as true, believing Muslims (with the exception of the Anagamba nomads). In forming social institutions, they refer to the Qur'anic rules.

This paper is mainly concerned with those institutions involving women. The Qur'an says, concerning marriages:

And if ye fear not that ye can treat with justice those orphaned, then marry ye women who please you: two, three, or four, and if ye fear that ye cannot treat them as equals, then ... one ..." (Qur'an 4,3)

The polygynous marriage is allowed but upon certain conditions: the husband shall treat his wives exactly equal. If he fails in doing so, he has no right to more than one wife. A dissatisfied wife has the right to demand a divorce but she must go to a judge, *qadhi*, and present her case. She can also obtain a divorce even if she does not have any complaint against her husband but she must give up her part of the bride price, *mahr*. The husband does not have to go to a judge if he wants to divorce. He can make use of "Thou art dismissed", *anti taliq*, that is to say divorce, after he has officially said three times that he is repudiating her as his wife. It is in conflict with the Qur'an to have concubines (except for slaves). Only women, "whom ye seek with your property (i.e. pay *mahr*) and marry without committing adultery", are allowed for the true believers. A guardian, *wali*, shall be consulted. Prostitution is an unofficial institution in many countries where Islam is practised⁵. This, perhaps pre-Islamic, trait has not disappeared.

Observations in Garawa and Maïné give us the impression that the ideal for marriage and divorce are partly as the Qur'an prescribes. The local interpretation of the verses on having up to four wives is that a man shall give his wives equal amounts of garments and other material things and treat them the same sexually. Adultery is not, as in many other Islamic societies, something, which necessarily leads to divorce.

⁵ Levy, 1957/69:119, "... inspite of the official disapproval of Islam, public prostitution has never been abolished, and although public women and their procurers are regarded as law breakers, they are to be found in practically all Muhammedan lands."

2.4. Manga views on marriage, femininity, masculinity, and ideal behaviour between the sexes

In Mainé and Garawa men certainly regard women as being of less value than men. We have heard men who said, "A woman is only worth half a man. So if you kill a woman it is like killing half a man." or "The lives of two women are equal to the life of one man."

Men in Mainé and Garawa have compared women and horses in the following way: "It is the same with a woman (wife) and a horse: you should treat her kindly, then she will stay in your compound. If not, she runs off. You should talk nicely to a woman and a horse alike."

Divorce in Eastern Niger most often takes place without involving a judge and *anti taliq* is not the normal practice. The majority of divorces in the area take place because the woman leaves her husband.

The form a wedding takes, is decided by whether the couple (or the girl) is being married for the first time (Manga *larisa*) or whether either the man or the woman have had one or more previous marriages (Manga *nyia*). The preferred *larisa*⁶ is between cross-cousins or patriagnatic parallel cousins, and it is called 'house marriage' or 'home marriage' (Manga *nyia fadoe*). In *larisa* attention is not paid to the desires of the couple. It is the family and the guardian (Manga *luwali*) that make decisions about the wedding, bride price, and dowry. The *luwali* is the girl's father or the man to who was given the responsibility for the daughter. The bride price consists of money paid to the bride's guardian and gifts to the bride. The dowry, which remains the bride's property, consists of foodstuffs, household goods, jewels, and clothing. We find examples of patri-local, viri-local, or neo-local residence. It is always the husband who provides a home for his wife.

Marriage between non-related Manga or inter-ethnic marriages are called 'bush marriage' (Manga *nyia karagae*), as opposed to 'house marriage'. A *nyia karagae* begins preferably⁷ later than *larisa* does, i.e. the second, third, fourth etc. time a person gets married. The person himself chooses the partner.

A fairly rare marriage form is that of 'charity marriage' (Manga *nyia sadaa*, Hausa *auren sadaka*) when a girl is given to a holy man without him paying the bride price.

Ideal femininity:

Manga verbalise the ideal Manga woman as follows⁸.

- a. A woman shall avoid shameful behaviour (*nəngua*), be properly dressed (to the wrist and the ankle), washed, and made pretty.
- b. A woman shall work diligently: sweep and filter the sand in the compound and take well care of guests.
- c. A woman shall always kneel when she brings her husband food and water – and

⁶ Observation has shown that this is not the most frequent form, see Table 4 and 6.

⁷ Observation has shown that *larisa* often is *nyia karagae*, see Table 4 and 6.

⁸ The following statements, a to r, originate from Bovin's examination by questionnaire in 1968 of Manga women and men in Garawa. The questions included, how the person interviewed would raise his/her potential daughter and son. These statements also derive from Høltedahl's discussions in Mainé in 1970 concerning the ideal woman and man.

- she shall prepare the millet porridge and gravy properly.
- d. A woman must not get into the habit of promenading around too much. She shall **remain** (*napcin*, i.e. sit) in her husband's compound and not run off.
 - e. A woman shall obey her husband, for example, go on errands at any time he asks her. She shall be scolded if she is contrary.
 - f. A woman must never talk back to her husband, offend him, or be jealous of her fellow-wife.
 - g. A woman shall bear children.
 - h. A woman shall observe the prayers.
 - i. A woman must never lie, steal, or be a parasite upon other people.

The woman ideal as expressed in these statements only refers to one type of woman, namely the married one, while status (B) is not referred to in the verbalised ideals. A woman can only achieve ideal femininity and a top position through marriage and her femininity is dependent upon her husband's masculinity.

Ideal masculinity:

The verbalised Manga man's ideal is seen as:

- j. A man shall avoid shameful behaviour (*nəngua*), provide for himself and not be a parasite upon other people and work hard.
- k. A man shall leave home if necessary to earn money.
- l. A man shall provide well for his wife and family, neither shall he leave his parents. His wife must not lack dress material, cola-nuts, food, or money. He must not be stingy.
- m. A man has the responsibility to see that there is millet in the corn crib the entire dry season, meat for ceremonial occasions, and that alms are given to the poor.
- n. A man must not be envious of others.
- o. A man shall have a very close knowledge about who are his superiors and not offend these persons.
- p. A man should preferably have as many persons (wives, children, and others) as possible being dependent upon him and show him respect.
- q. A man must not expose himself to shame by wearing dirty clothes when he is accompanied by friends.
- r. A man must not drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, nor avoid observing the prayers.

The verbalised man's ideal, like the verbalised woman's ideal, is imbued with Islamic standards.

We have also observed behaviour, showing that there are two masculine ideals, namely:

- > Man, Type I: The holy man (*malam*) who has wives in *purdah*, and who does not himself often walk about or visit *karuwai*.
- > Man, Type II: The extrovert 'woman hunter' who goes quite often about and in addition to many wives has frequent contact with *karuwai*.

A man does not swing successively between Type I and Type II, while a woman swings between woman status (A) and (B) as Figure 2 shows. The man most often chooses the type of life or life style suitable to him among the two. There are generally more men of Type II than of Type I in this society.

Ideal behaviour between the sexes:

The two sexes have both diverse work functions and are for the most part separated in space. It is the woman's work to fetch water from the well, stand at the mortar, move the grinding stone, and perform the housework, milk the cows, mind the children *etc.* It is the man's work to take care of the horses, take part in political meetings, earn money, make trade journeys *etc.* and work in the fields. High-ranking men and women do less work (or none) in fields than low ranking persons. It is dependent upon social rank whether the man goes alone out with his hoe or whether his wife or wives take part in the fieldwork. A completely secluded woman (*Manga kamu kulle*) in Mainé is, however, a rarity. Polly Hill⁹ is right in suggesting that full seclusion is difficult because of lack of wells.

It is shameful to perform work, which belongs to the other sex. "Have you seen that Fulani outside Garawa, who is so afraid that his wife should go out (and be seen by other men) that he **himself** goes from the camp to the village to sell the milk, he carries himself the calabash on his head. Ha, ha, ha, we all laugh when we see him," said a Manga man in Garawa.

In all public places (in the street, at the market, at the well) men and women should be separated. Strange men must not enter a compound if the husband is not home, a married woman must not receive male visitors. Only in the hut and only during the night can a man and his wife have physical contact with each other.

On the other hand, women and girls may go with each other holding hands, and they may visit each other at any time. Men can hold each other around the shoulders or by the hands in any public place.

Neither women nor men in Eastern Niger do wear veils. Hausa and Fulani women normally wear, at all times, a head scarf but the Manga women are usually bare headed. However, Manga women wear a scarf over their heads on special occasions: as a bride, as a guest at a naming ceremony, and at burials. Men of all the three named ethnic groups must have a cap on their head and wear a large wide tunic at all official functions.

⁹ See Hill, 1969:405, fn 16: "If women are to be in full seclusion, four 'physical conditions' must be satisfied: there must be house latrines, numerous wells, clay-walled compounds and donkeys to carry firewood. One factor relevant to the absence of wife-seclusion in rural Muslim Borno is, presumably the low level of the water-table there."

In Garawa there are house latrines and donkeys, but there are no house wells (two common village wells), and no clay walls. Hill is right that the lack of these factors are relevant to the degree of seclusion.

2.5. Life cycle and household cycle

A typical woman's career is shown in Figure 3. It looks different than the picture of the ideal woman. After the naming ceremony, when she is seven days old, a girl is called *fero*¹⁰. From the time she is in her seventh year until she is married, she is called *fero klayasko* (*klayasko* meaning 'three headed'), which is also the name of the three peaked hairstyle she wears in this period of virginity. During the marriage ceremony for her 'initial marriage', *larisa*, she is called *nzjudu*, bride. As a married woman she is called by the name *kamu*. Two names, *kamu gana* (little wife) and *kamu kurra* (big wife) reflect whether the woman has recently been married or whether she has been married for over five years or so to the same man. In a polygynous household the term *kamu kurra* is used to denote the first wife who has greater authority than the others do. A fellow wife in the same marriage is *dauma* and is called such by her fellow wives, not by her personal name.

It is normal for a Manga woman to be divorced, although all do not divorce their husband. The frequency of divorce is very high (Cohen, 1961) and our data show that there are women who have been married up to six times (Appendix I). During the first three months, *teirua*, after a divorce, which either has taken place formally or by the wife leaving, a woman must not re-marry. This is normal Islamic practice to establish whether the woman is pregnant. As a divorcee (or widow) she is called *zawar* and as such she can either live with her family or she can establish herself as a free woman, *karuwa*.

When a woman decides to re-marry, she is not called *nzjudu*, bride, for the second wedding as she was for her *larisa*. But she becomes *kamu* again after the wedding. It is only when she becomes an old woman, *kumurjo* that she is not automatically called *zawar* if she is unmarried. She is *kumurjo* until her death.

As *fero* and *fero klayasko* she is under her father's authority; as *kamu* under her husband's authority; as *zawar* she is either under her father's or her *magajiya*'s authority, but as *kumurjo* she is not necessarily under anyone's authority (see below Figure 20). Women, then, pass through the following four stages: *fero*, *klayasko*, *kamu*, and *kumurjo*. We found no grown women who had not been married at least once.

In addition to obtaining femininity through marriage and in relation to the husband's masculinity, a woman can obtain prestige in several different ways that are not dependent on her marital status. The following occupational possibilities for women can be found in Garawa and Mainé

tradeswoman – woman's hairdresser – midwife – female *griot* (singer).

Many women carry on a business, especially when they reach middle or old age. They deal in water or foodstuffs, salt, pottery, baskets, embroideries that they have made themselves. If a woman is clever and can accumulate a lot of money, she may invest in *hajj*, pilgrimage to Mecca. By this she obtains the title *Hajja*, (*Ajja*), which corresponds to *Al Hajji* for a man. In Garawa there were no *Hajja* in 1968, but one elderly, childless woman left the place on foot for

¹⁰ The terms in this section are Manga terms for the different stages in the life cycle and they can be used by persons who are not kin with or have affinal relations with the person concerned. These are terms of reference.

Mecca together with a small group of men. In Maïné there were a couple of women in 1970 who had the title *Hajja*. The occupation as a singer can only be obtained if the woman is born into a family of professional singers. Singers are the only women who, without male company, may roam around on horseback from village to village.

The typical man's life cycle has a different sequence than the woman's. After the naming ceremony he is called *tada*, boy. After his ninth year, when he is circumcised, he is called *zeiro*, young man, up to the time he is married for the first time. During the wedding ceremony, he is called *nzujudu*, bridegroom, or *mai*, chief or lord, which is only used until the ceremony is over. From then on, he is called *konga*, man, whether or not he remains married or takes a 2nd, 3rd, 4th, or 5th etc. wife. His wife or wives call him *kwa*, husband. Our data show examples of men who have been married up to 8 times but the majority has only one wife at a time. There is no special term for the man who visits *karuwai*. A divorced man is called *goboro* but he can still be called *konga*, grown man, and he retains his children and his household. An old man is *kiari* and only a *kiari* can have a beard (many of them have a grey, pointed beard). Hence, men go through the following four stages in their life: *tada*, *zeiro*, *konga*, and *kiari*.

It appears from the woman's and man's life cycle that there is an 8 – 10 years difference in age for entering *larisa* for the two sexes (cf. Fig. 3 and 4). The man is always older than his wife is. Common for both women and men is that through *larisa* they first obtain adult status – *larisa* is like an initiation. Another important characteristic is that the man does **not** change status when his 2nd, 3rd etc. marriage takes place or is dissolved. There is no status for the man, which corresponds to *karuwa* status for the woman (not *goboro*). The man keeps his status whether he moves in or out of marriage while the woman, when she leaves her status as a married woman and becomes a *karuwa*, is required to renounce the ideal femininity which she has had when married. A man will, however, suffer a loss of prestige and masculinity if several wives demand divorce or leave him.

The 'permanent core' in a household is the man. He is *fadoma* (the lord of the house) and is addressed as *maifaje* (lord of the house) in Manga or *maigida* (lord of the house) in Hausa. It is he who brings his wife or wives to his house via the patri-viri-local residence. He often lives close to his father and brothers. In Maïné, examples are found of one man being the head of several separate households, each consisting of one or several wives and children (case Q). It is also the man who legally has the right to all children his wives bear for him, i.e. with a divorce all older children stay with him, while the woman disappears from the household.

A woman's first-born child is often given away for upbringing with the husband's parents or other kin or close friends. Fig. 5 outlines how the man can take long trips, have a large action radius but changes residence very seldom only. The woman, however, has a small daily action radius the more so as she shall, ideally, stay indoors or near the yard. She, on the other hand, in the course of her life most often will move from household to household, all depending on the man she is married to at any given time. It is probable that a woman becomes more stationary with age. An old woman lives either (1) quite alone and carries on a trade, or (2) with her son, or (3) with a husband with whom she has chosen to stay.

2.6. Marriage statistics for Maïné and Garawa

Even though polygyny is allowed and possible, most men have only one wife at a time. In Maïné, of the 2000 inhabitants there were (in 1970) only three men who simultaneously had four wives, only five men who had three wives, the rest were bigamous or monogamous. In Garawa,

of the 400 inhabitants there were (in 1968) only three men who had three wives – all in Garawa Anum, none in Garawa Yallah. No man in Garawa had four wives. Table 1 and 2 include only those persons who, at the time of census, were married, *i.e.* no divorced men or women, widows or widowers.

Table 1: Married men in Maïné, showing number of wives
(source: Census record in Maïné for 1968)

married men	number	percent
1 wife	248	81 %
2 wives	52	17 %
3 wives	5	2 %
4 wives	3	1 %
TOTAL	308	101 %

Table 2: Married men in Garawa Yallah, showing number of wives
(source: Bovin's household study of Garawa Yallah, 1968)

married men	number	percent
1 wife	22	85 %
2 wives	4	15 %
3 wives	-	- %
4 wives	-	- %
TOTAL	26	100 %

Of Garawa Yallah's population of 125 adults, 40 are women who have been married at least once (whether or not they were married or single at the time of the interview).

Table 3 (Appendix) shows a clear dividing line between three and four marriages: one to three marriages are normal (this pertains to 90 % of the women) and four to six marriages are infrequent (pertains to 10 % of the women). No woman in Garawa Yallah has been married seven or more times. 40 % of all married women have only been married once, but if age is taken into consideration, it shows that one marriage is (quite naturally) most normal for those between 12 and 20 years. Women in their twenties and thirties had two marriages. Having had three marriages is quite normal for women in their forties. Older women, over 50 years, have relatively fewer marriages than women in their forties have. However, the sample is too small for us to dare point to a historical development.

Table 4 (Appendix) shows that for all women who have been married several times, only one of these marriages is of the 'house marriage' type while the rest of the marriages are 'bush marriages'. Furthermore can be seen from Table 4 that 18 out of 40 women have **not** married a man 'from outside'. Concerning the group that has only been married once (16 women in all), seven marriages (out of the 16) are 'house marriages' and nine are 'bush marriages', *i.e.*

approximately the same distribution which means that the first marriage of a girl is not necessarily an arranged 'house marriage'.

Table 5 (Appendix), men's marriages, shows again that there is a dividing line between three and four marriages, *i.e.* this is applicable to men as well as to women in Garawa Yallah. There are, however, no men under 20 years of age that have entered marriage, whereas we saw that women were married from 12 years upwards. Apart from this difference, it looks like the pattern for men is very much like that for women. One marriage is normal in the twenties, one to three in the thirties, and those in the forties have three or more marriages behind them. The total number of marriages is a little higher for men than for women – this possibly being due to polygyny. One man had as much as seven marriages while the highest number for a woman was six marriages.

Table 6 (Appendix) shows that only half the men have performed 'house marriage'. Men have more 'bush marriages' than the women (*cf.* Table 4 and 6, last columns) do.

It is our hypothesis that there is a negative correlation between the number of marriages and the number of children: many marriages correspond to few children and *vice versa*, few marriages – many children. The assumption is that children have a positive influence on the marriage stability. Therefore, we have set up Table 7 and 8 (Appendix), showing women and men respectively, listed by number of marriages and number of biological children.

Childlessness can be one of the reasons for divorce whereby the wife becomes *karuwa*. Thus the 'evil circle' continues since a *karuwa* easier gets venereal disease, which again, can make her barren and childless even though she was not barren before divorce.

Regarding Table 7 and 8 we should say that the number of children is uncertain. The total number should be considered higher than indicated. Errors in the numbers are due to the local cultural trait that the first born child is taboo and therefore not mentioned. The two tables show only that those who have been married many times, actually belong into the category with 0 children or 0 – 1 child. Many children (9 to 12) fall were born to those who have been married once. A widow with 12 (13) children is talked about in the village and surrounding area. I have heard people calling out, "Yes, N. has 13 children and all of them are sons !" (In fact there are two daughters among them and 10 or 11 sons, but the daughters are not mentioned.) Male children are definitely valued more highly than female children in this Islamic society are. Having children is lucky. The woman with her 12 (13) children had only been married once and she was quite proud of the fact that she had had all the children with the same husband.

On the average, the 40 married women had 2,1 children each (85 children divided by 40 women). The 28 married men had on the average 2,3 children each (63 children divided by 28 men), *i.e.* some more than the women. These figures are low compared with the rest of the world. The distribution is uneven, *i.e.* there are many that have 0 or few children and some that have many children. This indicates a generally bad state of health. People do not get their desired number of children. The infant death rate is approximately 30 % in East Niger. Venereal diseases are very widespread, and many men and women are sterile.

2.7. The *magajiya* – *karuwa* institution

In this paper, the Hausa term *karuwa* is used for the sake of convenience instead of the double term *karuwa* (H) / *zawar* (M) because Hausa is *lingua franca* in Eastern Niger and Northern

Nigeria. It means that the term *karuwa* is understood by all the ethnic groups in this poly-ethnic area (and by other social scientists, working with West Africa). The word *karuwa* (sg. *karuwa*, pl. *karuwa*) is a Hausa word, which, according to Abraham (1962:491) means:

(1) thief, (2) profligate man, harlot, ... (4) what a self-controlled man of the world!

In other words, it can be both masculine and feminine. The word *kàrùà* is a Kanuri word (Manga) which, according to Lukas (1967:200 and 95) means 'harlot'. The word *zawara* is Hausa which, according to Abraham (1962:972 and 95), means the same as *bazawara*, which is feminine singular, plural *zawarawa*, meaning 'woman no longer married, husbandless woman'¹¹. The word *zawar* (pl. *zawara*)¹² is a Manga word (Kanuri), which according to our observations in Garawa and Maïné means 'divorced woman' or 'unmarried woman'. This implies a woman who has been married at least once (is not a virgin) and includes, a widow - whether the woman prostitutes herself or not, *i.e.* she is no longer socially classified by means of a man, her husband.

Informants in Maïné and Garawa claim on one hand that *karuwa* and *zawar* have exactly the same meaning, only respectively in the Hausa and Manga language. On the other hand, other informants claim (and the same informants in different situations) that there is a difference between *karuwa* and *zawar*. This is the way a schoolteacher in Maïné explained it in 1968: "On dit *zawar*, pas *karuwa*, pour que les gens ne seront pas fâchées." (*i.e.* one says *zawar* not *karuwa* to a woman [when talking of her] so as to not insult her.) The local usage of the two words is ambivalent.

M.G. Smith writes (1960:225),

Hausa classify any adult who has no spouse as a wastrel or prostitute (*karuwa*), irrespective of sex.

The term *karuwa* is quite clearly Hausa but it must be pointed out that it, in the area in Eastern Niger, which is "Mangari" (Manga-land), is not used in the same way as it actually is in Hausaland. In Maïné and Garawa *karuwa* is always used in reference to a woman, not to a man.

The word *karuwa* is often paraphrased locally in Eastern Niger. The Manga have a metaphor, *Fanna ngim chillum*, where *Fanna* is a very common girl's name in Manga and *ngim chillum* means black (or dark) hut. *Fanna ngim chillum* is better understood when one knows another Manga metaphor, namely *Ngim chillum kmaria* (In a dark hut there is immorality, lots of things happen.)

The French-speaking Nigériens talk about *karuwa* and *zawar* thus, "Elle est la garce", and the French term is unvaried, without shades.

The *karuwa*-institution derives, most likely, as does the term *karuwa* itself (and the term *magajiya*) from the Hausa culture.

¹¹ A source to Hausa culture, R. Sutherland Rattray, 1913:174, translates *aure bajaware* with 'marriage of a woman of some age whose husband is dead or has left her', *i.e.* widow or divorced. Rattray describes this wedding in a separate chapter after a chapter on the virgin wedding among the Hausa.

¹² Cohen, 1981:242, spells it *zower*. It is the same as *zawar* in the present paper.

It is among the Hausa that prostitution is long established as an institution, and is a means of escape for women married against their will. Such women, normally members of the ruling class, who were subject to the strictest seclusion, could, if they successfully risked the hazards of the journey in the slave-raiding days, make their way to another Emirate and appeal for help to the woman who was the recognised head of prostitutes there. She would help them with money and housework and put them in touch with clients. These women have today a social status quite different from that of the newer class of 'peripatetic' casual prostitutes who are the product of modern conditions. They usually make an independent income from some craft. Each of them selects a small number of men with whom she maintains a permanent relationship. They approach her with gifts such as accompany a normal courtship, and the relationship is not noticeably commercial to either of the parties; that is, there is no immediate or standard payment and no demand for it. (M.G. Smith, unpublished *ms*, cited in Phillips 1953:141)

The women, Smith writes of from the Hausa culture, are like the *karuwai* we find in Mainé and Garawa. Only it is not necessary for them to move to a completely different district to establish themselves as *karuwai*. This can be done in the same town or village where the woman was once a married woman. Both in Hausa-land and in Manga-land, there seem to be several categories of *karuwai* (such as cases 7, 8, III, IV below will show), depending on the amount of social prestige and resources of a woman.

Some Nigériennes, though, leave their country, Niger, and go to the big cities on the coast of West Africa. However, in the new surroundings, they group themselves around a *magajiya* who they accept as their leader, for instance in the city of Abidjan, which has been investigated by Jean Rouch and Edmond Bernus (1957:232)

[...] (b) Prostituées nigériennes *karoua*; surtout des femmes Zerma ou Haoussa divorcées [...]

They form one out of six groups of prostitutes in Abidjan.

The *karuwa*-institution seems to be an old one in the Hausa culture, and also in people's conception of it. Thus, Baba of Karo tells that it is the same now as it was before:

Some prostitutes were the daughters of *malams*, some were the daughters of noblemen, some were the daughters of commoners; if their parents had arranged marriages for them against their will, they ran away and became prostitutes. Then and now, it's all the same; there have always been prostitutes. (M. Smith 1954:63)

The *zawar*-institution is not new in the Manga culture either. R. Cohen (1961:242) writes:

In Kanuri culture the status of *zower* (divorced woman) is an old and accepted one. Older informants at the court of the Shehu recounted the pre-British rules for organising the *zower* under a head woman in each village. This corps of divorced women were on call to cook for strangers who might come into the village, and to clean up the townside if noble visitations from the capital were imminent. Informants felt that these 19th century *zower* were similar to those of the present day; that is to say, they married when they could, but divorced easily and often. (Footnote: An early 19th century traveller in Bornu [Denham, 1831, vol. 3:154] notes that single women are very numerous because of the large number of divorces).

The *karuwai* are not characterised by their detachment from the society. They form, as mentioned above, a corps that performs certain, definite functions and they are always organised under a *magajiya*. A *magajiya* will always be the leader for a group of *karuwai*, the two positions are structurally interdependent.

M.G. Smith¹³ writes, that *karuwai* are "social deviants" in the Hausa culture. We believe, however, that we can show that *karuwai* in Eastern Niger are **not** social deviants, but represent

¹³

M.G. Smith in M. Smith (1954:25),

Female *karuwai* besides practising prostitution, engage actively in craft and trade, and are the traditional supporters and exponents of the cult of spirit-possession (*bori*), for which their status suits them. As *karuwai* they are deviants

a common stage in life for the woman. Therefore, we also feel that one cannot translate *karuwa* as "prostitute". The best translation of *karuwa* is perhaps "courtisane" which S. Bernus¹⁴ also suggests.

The word *magajiya* (like the word *karuwa*) is a Hausa word, taken up in the Manga language. It means, according to Abraham (1962:632)

(1) woman inheriting, heiress, (2) elder sister, (3) title for Chief's mother or his elder sister, his father's younger sister, title for senior procuress, (4) princess.

Magajiya was the title of the queen or the king's mother in early Hausa history.¹⁵ In Northern Nigeria the majority of *magajiya* are women, but in some towns the *magajiya* is a man, in that case unmarried and homosexual.¹⁶ In Niger there are only female *magajiya*.

According to several informants in Mainé, the *magajiya* was in earlier times the Chief's sister and the leader for all young, unmarried women, *i.e.* the young marriageable girls as well as the *zawara*: divorcees, widows, and *karuwai*. It is most likely that we can schematise the situation as follows:

magajiya leader for:

- honourable, chaste, virtuous young girls
- divorcees and widows - *zawara*
- *karuwai* - *zawara*

According to an old informant, the *magajiya*'s position has not always been the same: In the past, the *magajiya* was something other than a leader for "the prostitutes". Through this conversation he showed that he knew of the western moral conception of *karuwai*, which he had from his long contact with the French who had immediately compared *karuwai* with the prostitutes in France.¹⁷ The increase in number of *karuwai*, resulting from the influence of the French in both small towns like Mainé and the largest towns in Niger, Niamey and Zinder, brought a change in the conception of the *karuwa*-institution. It was placed more on an equal footing with the European brothel-institution – and was now and then forbidden by the authorities. A *magajiya* can no longer accept gifts from young virgins, as law forbids this. There

from the Islamic norm of marriage for all adults, and as social deviants they are the traditional custodians of religious deviance in the spirit-possession cult.

¹⁴ See S. Bernus (1969:156),

Le terme français de 'prostituée' ... traduit mal la situation réelle qu'occupent les *wei kuru*, femmes de tous le monde (en Songhay), ou *karuwai* (en Hausa). Il semble que le terme de 'courtisanes' serait plus adéquat.

¹⁵ S.J. Hogben and A.H.M. Kirk-Greene (1966:147),

In early Hausa history the queen is often known as *Magajiya*, and the legend indicates that in olden times the Hausa states favoured uterine descent. Daura town is sometimes referred to as *Birnin Magajiya* Daura. In Kano history, as well as that of Bornu, it is significant how influential a role the king's mother played in political life.

¹⁶ In the town Kontagora, for example. For this information we thank teacher Anita Kirk, Kontagora.

¹⁷ The French administrator Maurice Abadie wrote (1927:215),

La PROSTITUTION est répandue partout, notamment chez les Haoussa, les Djerma, les Kanouri et les Toubou du Kaouar. Elle est, en général, l'appanage des veuves et des divorcées. Bien des femmes mariées s'y livrent néanmoins avec le consentement tacite de leur mari. On a vu ... que prespue toutes les femmes de Fachi et de Bilma se prostituent aux caravaniers. Il n'est pas rare de trouver des jeunes filles qui se prostituent avec l'assentiment de leurs parents; la mere proxénète est commune a Zinder. La profession de prostituée n'a rien de deshonorant; elle encourt, tout au plus, un léger mépris. La prostituée qui devient enceinte pratique L'avortement ou ... Partout ailleurs, la prostitution fait courir les plus graves dangers a la santé publique.

can only be one or two *magajiya* in each town as this is an elected position. In order to be elected, a woman must have been *fero klayasko, kamu* and now be a *karuwa*.

Today, the *magajiya* is elected by the *karuwai* and the local party committee must approve this election. Niger has only one political party (Parti Progressiste Nigérien). Together with her *karuwai*, the *magajiya* takes part in the political life.¹⁸ These official functions show that the sexual behaviour and free position of *magajiya / karuwai* have no moral stigmatising affect on them in situations which may be defined as cultural 'front stage' situations.

J. Nicolas also writes that in the town Maradi (further west in Niger Rep.) one no longer speaks about *karuwa* but instead about *zawara*:

Il est en effet curieux de noter que les prostituées, qui autrefois portait le nom de *karuwa* (femmes de mauvaises vie) donné par l'Islam, se nomment maintenant *zawara* (femmes-libres) [...]

La 'femme-libre' est d'ailleurs utilisée par le parti PPN-RDA comme égérie ! C'est d'ailleurs lui qui a fait changer le nom de *karuwa* en celui de *zawara*. Les *zawara* efilent le jour de la fête nationale, font partie de la jeunesse du Parti, sont utilisées pour propager les mots d'ordre. (*Études Nigériennes*, no. 21, pp. 58 – 59)

One can say that the *karuwa* has been 'rehabilitated'. She is not a 'naughty girl', she is a 'free girl'. It is she, the *zawara* in Maradi, and the *karuwa* in Maïné, who introduces new fashions and new habits, which the schoolgirls then imitate. A *magajiya* is now often designated (referred to and entitled) by the respectful '*La Présidente*' by the Manga, Hausa, Fulani, and people of other ethnic groups in Eastern Niger, whether they are French-speaking or not. Her political power is clearly large.

We have found that practically all of the women in Maïné are *karuwai* when they are not married or old. In Garawa we can still find some divorcees and widows who are not *karuwai* (case 2 and case 8) but who choose to establish themselves under their father's or another married man's protection.¹⁹

3 Observations of women and men

3.1. Focus on gender differentiation

We have observed that the frequency of divorce in Maïné and Garawa is very high. We find that many divorced women in Maïné (over 200 women according to *magajiya* Ladi) and approximately 5 women in Garawa live independent of men for a longer or shorter period of

¹⁸ See A. Cohen (1969:63),

The prostitutes have always been a significant factor in the politics of the Quarter. This has been particularly so since party politics came to the Quarter as from the beginning of the 1950s. The prostitutes soon organised in separate female branches of two major south Nigerian parties, the N.C.N.C. (N.E.P.U.) and the Action Group. As the housewives are secluded from public life, they have not voted in the [...] elections [...].

See also S. Bernus (1969:158),

on reconnaît fort bien à Niamey le rôle important joué par les *magajiya*, dès avant la guerre, dans la diffusion des idées politiques à travers toutes les couches de la population et même, au moment de référendum de 1958, le poids apporté par *Magajiya* Amirou, la plus importante *magajiya* de Niamey, en faveur du R.D.A. dont elle était l'un des plus ardents supporteurs.

¹⁹ This is similar to the situation among the Hausa in Ibadan. See A. Cohen (1969:55),

The passage from wifedom to prostitution after divorce is not automatic. A divorced woman who does not immediately practice prostitution and who remains at home, with her parents or other relatives is called *bazawara*, which means literally a formerly married woman who is currently not married. But if the *bazawara* does not marry within a short time and if she begins to go out of the house in daylight, she becomes known as a prostitute.

time. We have not heard about the divorced independent woman, the *karuwa*, during the verbalisation of the woman-ideals. The existence of the "free-woman-status" should be seen in relation to how women experience marriage. We propose that:

The marriage institution and the *karuwa* institution represent alternative possibilities for women. The existence of, and the oscillation of the women between, the two institutions reflects a conflict of sex roles. The interplay between the two institutions must be viewed in the light of rank possibilities for women as well as for men in the society.

Our approach to the study of the two institutions is a structuralist approach as well as a processualist approach. We shall describe types of relationship between men and women as well as their possibilities of sanction respectively towards each other: socially, economically, emotionally, and religiously. We consider the Niger woman's beauty, sexuality, home and business abilities, and fertility as her important resources. The woman's relative age determines which resources she possesses at any given time. Whether or not a woman obtains what she wants in marriage (or outside of it) is dependent on the amount and kinds of resources she has and the way she administers them in relation to the man's masculinity and affluence.

It turns out that the existence of new institutions (school, hospital *etc.*) in Maïné has an effect on people's actions and consequences also for the sexual role pattern. For Maïné, we examine whether an increase in the men's economic possibilities and at the same time of his possibilities for obtaining masculinity and prestige are accompanied by a corresponding rise in the woman's possibilities for public development. The woman's possibilities do **not** rise proportionally, and this is reflected by the fact that the number of *karuwai* in relation to the population figures is still larger in Maïné than in Garawa. The women in Maïné still have just the two alternatives, but more and more women in Maïné choose to swing between these two.

Through a short analysis of the sex role pattern, the ideal femininity, and the ideal masculinity in Denmark, we shall see what alternatives married-woman-status and the status as a prostitute represent for the woman in Denmark. We are interested in this to the extent that it can contribute to an understanding of the circumstances, which are characteristic for a *karuwa* in Niger and of how the sexual relation between men and women is related to the woman's choice, concerning her marital and life career.

Bovin's "ethnographic present" is from March to December 1968 and Høltedahl's "ethnographic present" is from March to December 1970. In the field, both of them mainly practised participant observation, employed loosely structured interviews, and made use of some questionnaires.

It is important to mention their different marital statuses, which made it clear in the eyes of the local population that they did not have the same position. Therefore, they did not receive "identical treatment". Furthermore, this had a consequence as to the impressions they received. They both wore the local woman's clothing, which proved to be the most practical.

Bovin lived for the first month of her fieldwork in Maïné. Later on she lived alone for 8 months in Garawa in three round huts inside an enclosure of the village. She was the first European to have settled in Garawa.

Høltedahl lived during the entire time of her fieldwork with her husband who was an official, a medical doctor, in Maïné. For the first two months they lived in a clay house directly in the middle of the town. Later, they moved to a cement house in Maïné's official's quarter.

Holtedahls presence in the town was immediately understandable: she was "her husband's wife", like at home in Europe.

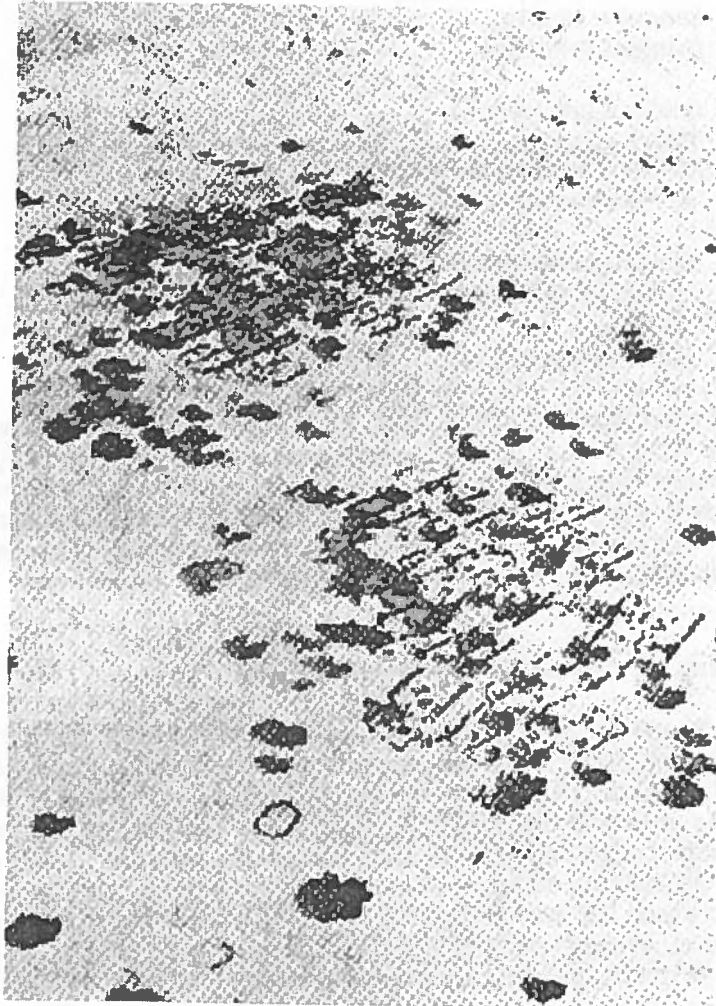
Bovin's presence in Garawa was less understandable. Her neighbours made several serious attempts to get her married locally. She undertook household analyses of all the households in Garawa Yallah and prepared a questionnaire investigation of the ethnic stereotypes and of the sex role stereotypes.

Holtedahls undertook observations in the school and in the homes of the school children, so as to obtain an impression of the school's influence in the changes in socialisation, sex roles, as well as to social and ethnic identity.

Many ethnic groups are represented in both Maïné and Garawa. Therefore, the language situation for the field workers was difficult. Bovin "learned" Manga, as the village was mainly inhabited by Manga. The majority of the representatives of other ethnic groups, coming to Garawa understood some Manga. Holtedahls "learned" Hausa, which is the trade language in Niger and which is spoken by all groups who are settled in the more cosmopolitan Mainé. Both used, especially in the beginning, French-Manga, French-Hausa, and French-Fulani interpreters.

After the field work it was most interesting to be able to compare our data, especially because Bovin had been in Maïné for one and a half months, and Holtedahls had been in Garawa for a couple of days. Therefore, we each had a check on the other's data. Both Bovin and Holtedahls also knew many informants – with a two years interval. We have on this basis attempted to form a picture of real and ideal behaviour in both Garawa and Mainé. The comparison between the culture of Garawa and Maïné gives some insight into development of the area. As we had not planned our fieldwork together, we do not have analogous data; but we feel that there is such an overlapping that we can still make comparisons and arrive at certain conclusions. A weakness of the cases we shall present below is that we lack exact data about the means of sanctions which women and men can mobilise *vis-à-vis* each other.

4. Case studies from Garawa



Aerial view of GARAWA village (Photo M.B.)

Through the following cases we shall shed light on some characteristic types of relations. These concern:

- relations between the sexes:
unmarried girl – man,
wife – husband,
karuwa – man,
magajiya – man;

- relations between women:
married woman – married woman,
married woman – *karuwa*,
karuwa – *karuwa*,
magajiya – *karuwa*;
- relations between men:
malam – *malam*,
malam – "woman hunter",
"woman hunter" – "woman hunter";
- relations between kin:
parents – children (biological children, foster children,
children-in-law),
sister – brother.

In the description of concrete situations in the cases, we stress the circumstances which we feel have importance for the actions and choices of these people. We have especially chosen the examples for the purpose of examining the various stages of the life cycle of women and men as well as the processes taking place with the transition between these – particularly the entry into and the dissolution of marriage. (We should make it clear that while all cases are directly observed, the persons in all events are given pseudonyms.)

4.1. An "initial wedding" - Amina, 12 year old bride

Amina is 12 years old. She is the only adopted child of the retired Fulani *griot* of Garawa, the rich Gombo and his wife Faji, who is a Manga. Amina is to be married and this is her *larisa*. It is building up to a large village feast. The women have been working for several weeks before the wedding to prepare the millet. There are three women by each mortar, while the *griots* accompany them at work by playing their drums. On market day, the drummers officially announce that Gombo will give his daughter away in marriage next Friday. Thursday, the day before the wedding, more than 200 wedding guests arrive in Garawa. Many of them come from the village where Amina's biological parents live. They gave Amina to Faji and Gombo when she was quite small, as foster daughter. The biological parents come as guests of Gombo; they are Manga and *griots*.

The bride's foster mother, Faji, is the great hostess. She arranges and directs, and approximately 100 women and children are gathered in front of her hut towards evening. She has had sewed a gold brocade dress for the occasion. The gifts are stacked and are admired by the guests. They resemble an abundant market place with a large number of enamelled bowls²⁰, plates, cloth, a bed, bed covers, pillows, clay pots, calabashes with rice, onions, spices, soap, pomade *etc.* The bride's chest stands in the middle of all this, silver jewellery proudly displayed on top. This is a gift to the bride from the bridegroom Mammadu. Amina is placed on a special mat and some women put henna on her hands and feet as they break out in shrill, happy yells. "Yirri-yirri-yirri ..." No men are present in the yard but some small 8 – 9 year old boys play "bandits", touching the bride. Amina is the only one in the gathering who wears a shawl over her head. About 8 p.m., a strong woman carries her on her back ("as if she were a little baby") down

²⁰

Footnote in A. Cohen (1969:67):

Ever increasing numbers of Czechoslovakian made, brightly-coloured, enamelled bowls [...] important status symbol.

to the bridal hut, which Mammadu has built, and which Amina is now to see officially for the first time. She cries all the way, for the women say, "If you don't cry, you love your husband too much!" and that is shameful. Amina cries as she should. The more than 100 women and children in front of Faji's hut perform "plays" the entire evening. Several professional female singers change as choir-leaders and the ululation, "Yirri-yirri-yirri ..." break through now and then throughout the long verses of song. The women dance and use kitchen utensils as musical instruments for this one occasion. The verses of the song say, among other things, "You shall always kneel down when you bring food and water to your husband" and similar instructive sentences about ideal femininity to the young bride. She sits far back in the yard, surrounded by the bridesmaids. Seven or eight middle-aged, married women dance provocatively, wriggle their posteriors, and clown about, as they themselves and the public laugh.

His male friends have surrounded Mammadu (who is more than twice the age of the bride) the entire day. One of them plays the lute and they sit outside the yard in the street. Mammadu is rich. He is a tailor and he has a treadle sewing machine and one of the two transistor radios in the village. He is splendidly dressed, wearing a new embroidered cap and European long trousers. He is sitting with a shy expression on his face. He does not wear henna on his feet as he did with his first wedding. Five years ago he was married to a Manga girl from whom he is divorced and who is now a *karuwa* in Garawa. Mammadu is approximately 30 years old. His father was Buzu, his mother Hausa/Fulani. He himself only speaks Hausa and Manga. Mammadu's elder brother is the male leader during the wedding. He is also a tailor and lives between Mammadu and Gombo.

Friday morning, the bride and bridegroom are still separated. They have slept between the bridesmaids and the bridegroom's male friends respectively. The bridesmaids go provocatively about in a close group with bowls in their hands to beg, even demand, money from the bridegroom's friends. Friday is the actual wedding day and Faji whispers in my ear: "Tonight, at midnight, the bride shall be taken secretly over to the new hut where the bridegroom is."

The time of the wedding is the market day and with a full moon. The rainy season and the cultivation of the fields have begun. On Friday, the big Fulani ceremony, *sharo*, is held at the market place. (This includes young men whipping each other while surrounded by *griots* and the public.) Special efforts have been made with this ceremony on the occasion of the wedding and because the bride's foster father had been a *griot*. This *sharo* was held for several days.

The entire day the bride sits home, quite serious, at the back of the yard, holding an onion in her hand. It is "medicine against bad spirits". The *karuwa* Bintu is the bridesmaid who sits closely beside her. Saturday the bride has her hair re-done, but still "triple-headed" and Sunday her biological family and the other guests depart Garawa. On Sunday all the enamelled bowls are stacked in fine columns inside the new bride hut and Amina, proud and happy, shows her new hut off, giving cola nuts to all the women who come to visit. The Maria Theresa silver coins she wore on a woollen string around her neck when she was "three-headed" have been made into arm rings and ankle rings by the smith.

Amina goes each morning out to the field with food for her husband and is accompanied by a girlfriend. She has a shawl over her head and hurries home as soon as she has delivered the food. Two weeks after the wedding day, Mammadu's male friends perform the ritualised "help to the bridegroom", in which a fairly large crowd of young men go out together on a particular day and help Mammadu with the field work. Two months after the wedding day, Amina, for the first time, gets her hair done in the married woman style, *dambu*, with agate jewellery, *kari-kamallu*, on the forehead. She has now become *kamu*, married woman.



A bride of about 12 years sitting in the back of the compound, surrounded by her girl friends. Only the bride covers her head with a long shawl – here she also covers her mouth. She sits all day long, holding an onion in her hand.
Sitting in front: an unmarried girl with four Maria Theresa silver coins around her neck, a sign of unmarried status. (Photo M.B)

Comment: The wedding is a typical *larisa*. It is celebrated abundantly, with many preparations, guests, gifts, and ritual clowning and joking. The wedding day is a Friday (Trimingham, 1959:171: "The majority of people prefer Friday for a virgin and Monday for a divorcee or widow.") because it is a virgin wedding. It is in sharp contrast to a *karuwa* wedding (Yurrati, case 7). During the entire month-long process, the bride plays up to the expectations of the ideal woman: she cries, takes extra pains with the food after the wedding, is accompanied by a girlfriend when she walks out. She is submissive with her husband. He is rich and has high prestige and is older than she is. The bridegroom's and the bride's relative ages, 30 and 12 years, are typical. That the wedding is *nyia karagae* does not seem to be as important as is the fact that it is a *larisa*. The bride's foster parents play the main role during the wedding. The relationship between mother and daughter is close. The best method for a middle-aged woman to obtain maximum prestige is, as in this case, to be the generous "bride-mother". And that is prestige, which can be acquired even though she remains inside the four walls of the home.

That a *karuwa* sits near and centrally among the bridesmaids, *i.e.* during the "rite de passage", shall not be interpreted as accidental. The *karuwa* represents a contrast to the chaste bride on the ideal plane, while at the same time, the *karuwa* represents the adult life with sex, which

awaits the bride. A *karuwa* is perhaps a "false bride" capturing the evil spirit.²¹ Later, after the wedding, a separation between Amina and Bintu takes place. They must not visit each other after Amina has become *kamu*.

4.2. Fanna, a young married woman

Fanna is 13 years old. She was married when she was 12 to her father's brother's son, Greimar. This had been decided since Fanna was 7 years old when her father, Darman, died. He had expressly said that Fanna should marry his brother Garumma's son, and so it was. They are all Manga and this is a "house marriage". But a year after the *larisa*, Fanna takes off. She is dissatisfied with her husband. She moves home to her mother Kondowo and stays with her and her siblings. She is a "child" again. The following days, Greimar does not seem less irritable than before. Fanna comes and visits me as usual but she has a more absent-minded look and is changed. She is also a little shyer. I ask her why she left and she replied that her husband was irritable and impolite and would not greet her mother Kondowo when he went past her yard.

One day I see her returning from the amulet-maker and Fanna lifts her dress to show me her new amulet on a string under the dress. "To protect against sorcerers," she said.

I talk with the people in the village about Fanna and learn that she is so young that she is considered a *kalle-kalle* (that is the name of a little bird) because she still is not an experienced woman who knows love. Neither is she *kamu tjurraa* (a woman who has given birth) and she still plays with the *fero klayasko*. Fanna is considered only to be a "half-way *zawar*" (literally: "wild pig *zawar*") who, indeed, runs away but who has not as yet seriously gone away from her husband. The old hunter, Mairami, uses a saying about Fanna's behaviour: Young women like her run away because "the house's own sheep has no fat".

One day I met Fanna in the village, she has against custom a shawl over her head and she almost hides herself from people while hurrying along. For once she does not look at me. I visit her in Kondowo's yard in the evening where she for the time being has her own hut in the corner. She is sitting together with her small brothers and her mother. But a few days later, her brother-in-law, Inissa, joyfully comes and tells that tonight Fanna will once again move in with his elder brother Greimar. There is happiness in the village but there is muttering about the case, it is not talked about openly. Fanna invites me home to the hut where she and Greimar shall once again live. She is burning incense, costly smelling incense, which we let curl up under our long dresses. Within a year I heard that Fanna has had a son.

Comment: The deceased father and *luwali* Darman's decision stands firm. Fanna marries her father's brother's son. However, she "looses" femininity because of her husband's incorrect attitude towards her mother. The mother-in-law / son-in-law relation is problematic. The marriage is a *nyia fadoe*, "house marriage", and an initial marriage which has been arranged for both partners. The young couple live with his family, have their own "corner" but use the same entrance as the agnatic relatives who are again neighbours of her family. The difficulties with "house marriage" are also reflected in the old hunter's saying.

²¹

See Tremearne, 1914/1968:118-119,

The protection of the bride and bridegroom against their respective sexual *hori*, therefore, seems to have been very thorough originally [...] a false bride attracted the attention of the jealous *hori* [...]

But the young woman does not exactly run off, she later-on returns to her husband. In the meantime she is not with a *magajiya*, but rather with her mother. Fanna is spoken about as a "half-way-zawar" but not as a *karuwa*. The mother-daughter relationship is close. Young Fanna is in a period of crisis, perhaps for reasons other than her explicit statement about her husband who does not behave as he should and ought to. Perhaps the reason is her suspicion of being pregnant and this is what the protective amulets are for. The incense represents the reunion between the marriage partners: She once again takes the trouble to make herself attractive as a woman and a wife.

4.3. Aisha, a married woman with children

Aisha is perhaps 30 years old. She is a fully experienced *kamu kura*. The first time I asked her how many children she had, she replied "two", later on "three" and some months later, the answer was "four children" ! The explanation is that a Manga always gives a number lower than the factual number of children, in that the first-born is a taboo-child. Lawan, who is 13 years old and living with Aisha, is never mentioned by name, he is by Aisha referred to as "that boy there". The reason that Aisha replied "two" (and not "three") the first time is that her son of 9 years age lives with his father in another village. Aisha's *larisa* was celebrated with her cousin – father's brother's daughter marriage, *i.e.* the preferred "house marriage" – and she was married to Sule for a couple of years. The marriage broke up and for 8 years she was married to a Kanembu, *Malam Ari*, in a village to the north. She had two children by him, Budu and a son. Her third marriage is again with her first husband, Sule, who is the father of her fourth child Kaimari (2 years old, whom I could not have avoided having as a foster daughter, should I have remained any longer in Garawa. Aisha explained about the custom of giving children away as a beautiful Manga custom.). Aisha comes several times to tell me how difficult it is to give birth to children, "*djau, djau*" (hard, hard). She examines my breasts and asks, "Are white women the same as we black women ?"

One day we discuss how the ideal husband is. Her comments are, "*Kwa ngilla ngilla, wulli ngubbu !*" (Good, good husband, much money). She says this, so that it sounds as if an ideal husband equals a lot of money (*i.e.* He gives his wife many things). In reply to my question whether she would prefer a poor, beautiful husband or a rich, ugly husband, Aisha answered, "One rich and ugly."

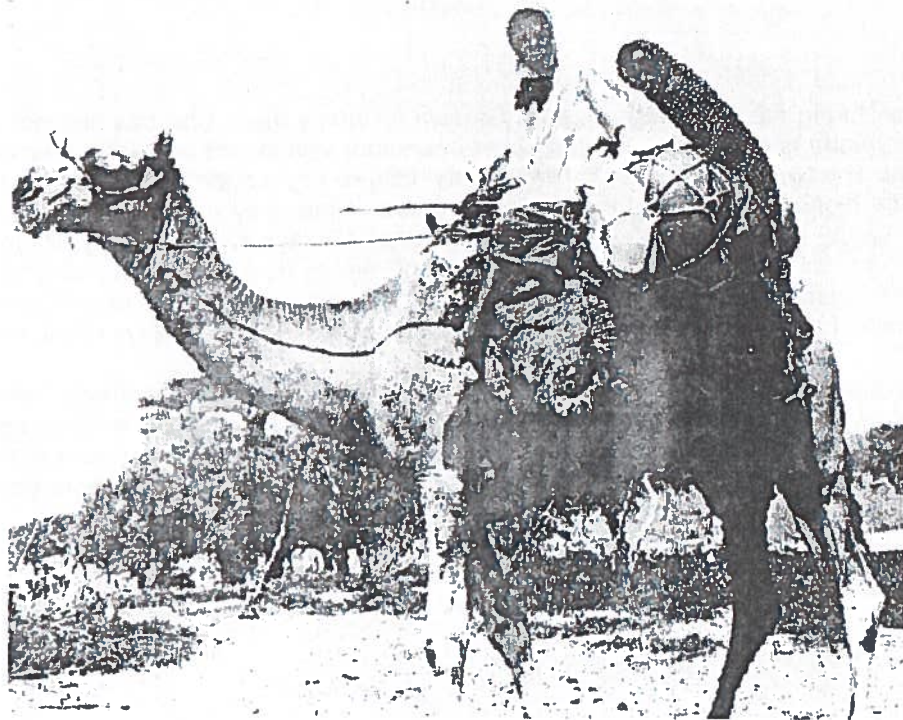
Still, Aisha would not like to see Sule take another wife (she does not want him to be **that** rich). She is serious and joking at the same time when she says, "No, one wife, ONE ! That must be enough. That is the best." She could think of running away from Sule if he decided to take a second wife, she continues.

Aisha is a potter during the dry season. She sells clay jugs and earns herself a little cash. But otherwise, Sule is very good to give her and the three children new clothes. Recently, Aisha, Budu, and Kaimari have received dresses of a blue-patterned material, which they all quite proudly display. The tailor has sewn them in the three patterns which are appropriate for (1) married woman (Aisha), (2) "three-headed" (Budu), and (3) little girl (Kaimari). Sule is a merchant and trades with kolanuts and goats, in addition to being a farmer.

Some days it is as if Aisha desires to be in complete seclusion and she talks about how good it is to stay (*napcin*) in her husband's home and do everything there that should be done. Aisha is a bit different on other days. She flirts a little with other men, says jokingly that it might be that one ought to leave home.

Once during the year, Aisha leaves Garawa for many days. She has first got permission from Sule. Aisha is allowed to visit her sister in another village and goes together with her daughter Budu. The two of them leave by dromedary, followed by a male relative, as they are not allowed to ride alone. They have presents for the sister. When they return home, they have other gifts and happy faces, as well as new impulses after 10 days of being away. Budu has learnt new song-games from the girls of the other village and is now leading the singing in the evening. Aisha is, for several days, surrounded by the women from the neighbouring houses who examine her presents and hear about her experiences; and she enjoys telling them.

Comments: Aisha has tried "house marriage" and then "bush marriage" and is now back in the first marriage. It is typical for a mature woman in this society to have several "types" of children towards whom she behaves differently. But it is atypical to return to the first husband after an in-between-marriage. She is proud of her children and talks about how difficult it is to give birth to children and take care of them.



A young bride, *nzjudu*, with a shawl covering her head is riding a camel on the way to the village of her husband-to-be further north. Her mother sits in front of the camel. Part of the dowry is hanging on the sides of the camel. (Photo M.B.)

In the one and same woman, there seems to be a latent conflict between behaving as (a) a nice wife in *purdah* and (b) as a free woman who breaks out. At the same time she remains in her first role: does not travel alone, for instance. Her current husband satisfies her demands for material goods *etc.* and she possesses the means of sanction so as to prevent a potential polygyny in her family.

4.4 Kurrati, a *karuwa*

Kurrati is in her middle twenties and is of Mobber origin. She has been married several times but has mainly lived as an independent *karuwa*. She currently lives in Garawa, even though she does not have any relatives living in this village – except for a distant relative named *Malam Lawan*, in whose yards she has her hut. Kurrati does not have the married woman's coiffure but instead has a "page-boy hairstyle". That is the *karuwa* coiffure. She does not visit married women nor does she participate in ceremonies where these sit together. She is the only *karuwa* in the Manga quarter of Garawa Yallah. She often visits in the ethnically heterogeneous quarter, Garawa Anum.

Kurrati has many male customers. One of them is Mastapha, my cook, who spends a large part of his salary to purchase kolanuts and dress material for Kurrati and giving her money. He often disappears from my yard in the evening and goes around the corner where *Malam Lawan's* yard is, and where Kurrati has her rented hut. Once, when we were on a riding tour in the bush, Mastapha confided to me that he means to marry Kurrati and that he has already given her such and such an amount of material. Another day, when Mastapha and I are riding outside the

village, he suddenly stops his horse and says, "Can you see those footprints ?!" I notice that a couple of bare feet must have walked the path from Mainé to Garawa very early in the morning. Mastapha says that he is sure that they are Kurrati's footprints. Mastapha is not the only man who visits Kurrati. She has a different way of walking than married women and also she has a different way of glancing sideways: with a slight squint.

The day, I interviewed her about how she would raise a daughter if she had one, she answered (like the married women), "She should learn to filter the sand in the yard, obey her husband in everything etc.

Comments: The *karuwa* has a special hairstyle, way of walking, and general behaviour as well as a temporary dwelling (rents a hut). If she were a married woman, one would never have seen her footprints alone in the sand. She would have been accompanied by someone and would not be walking alone from Garawa to Mainé. It is worth noting that the *karuwa* does not mention anything about her hypothetical daughter learning to be a good *karuwa*. She names as ideal the virtues of the married woman.

4.5. *Magajiya* Fatima and *Magajiya* Mana, leaders of *karuwai*

Magajiya Fatima of Garawa:

Fatima is the only *magajiya* in Garawa. She is the leader for the village's four to five *karuwai* of various ethnic groups. One of them is Kurrati. However, Fatima does not have daily contact with her *karuwai*. If there is dissatisfaction or such in the relationship between the *karuwai* and their customers – or other problems – *Magajiya* Fatima enters the picture.

Fatima is a Fulani woman and has her own enclosure in Garawa Anum. Her neighbours belong to the foreign ethnic elements in the village: one Dagara water carrier, two Hausa butchers, and one Hausa *griot*. She lives far from the chief and the mosque, in one of the main alleys from the village to the well. She has a field of millet that she cultivates herself, *i.e.* she has been allocated land by the Manga village chief and is one of Garawa's permanent inhabitants.

Fatima is middle-aged, 35 or 40 years old, light complexioned, and very slender. She is well dressed, her headscarf is always bound high up on her head. It is to Fatima that the men address themselves in the evening to gossip and buy cigarettes. Her talents as a tradeswoman give her a considerable income. Also it is to Fatima the men go when they want to contact one of the *karuwai*. She speaks several languages and can arrange everything. She is one of the few women who can sit out in the street in a little chair. She speaks openly to men passing by, whether they are the people of the village or travellers. Fatima is popular among the bachelors as well as among the married men.

One day Garawa is visited by Niger's Minister for Rural Affairs. He comes out here with his entourage all the way from Niamey. And it is *Magajiya* Fatima who, heading her *karuwai*, is going to greet the minister and his prominent retinue. They glide erect and finely dressed, one by one, in front of the visitors. Both the *magajiya* and her *karuwai* offer the politicians their hand. Then, one by one, they glide away and back on the scene remain only the prominent men together with a troop of female *griots*. The rest of the women and the girls in the village are sitting far from the minister in the spectators' seats behind a rope.



A *Magajiya* leads the dance of the women at a celebration (Photo M.B.)

Magajiya Mana of Isari:

Mana is a *magajiya* in the village of Isari, which lays approximately 50 km north of Garawa. (We introduce this third village Isari because we have data on this *magajiya*, which we do not have on the *magajiya* of Garawa or Maïné, and which might be useful to the understanding of the *magajiya*-institution in general.)

Magajiya Mana has many names and titles, which are used in different situations by different persons. Mana, Manata, *Margaram* (which any *magajiya* can be called), *Magajiya*, and *La Présidente*. She is Manga and has her own enclosure near the market place. She has been married and divorced two times, first with a Manga and then with a Hausa – who is the father of her 3-year-old son. Mana is the only *magajiya* in Isari and commands an enormous respect even though she is only about 30 years old. She talks loudly, openly, and with authority to all; is not bashful, like a *kamu* is, when she goes in the streets. (She is the only Manga woman who has ever shaken hands with me of her own initiative when we first met each other and she spoke Hausa to me not Manga.) She swaggers and always wears costly clothing and jewellery.

There is an autumn celebration in Isari and in connection with it there is a wrestling match between the young Manga men. Afterwards some Manga women dance in single file. It is *Magajiya* Mana who dances first in line, followed by three *karuwai*, nine *kamu*, and fifteen *fero klayasko*.

Mana is, of all the women in the town, the only one who during the dance wears a large, heavy silver cross around her neck. It is a *croix d'Agadez* (Tuareg cross), which she has received as a gift from her favourite lover when he, some months ago, took her on a trip to the capital city, Niamey. People talk about it, "*Elle a même fait Niamey !*" (She has been all the way to Niamey !)

Mana earns money and receives gifts through three channels: (1) through her own trade transactions, (2) from men for whom she has arranged a contact with a *karuwa*, (3) she often receives 1 or 2 shillings or kolanuts from her *karuwai*. Of these, there are two Fulani girls and approximately four Manga girls (at present; the number of girls varies from time to time).

In the evening, Mana lies on a mat inside her yard after having put her little son to bed inside the hut. On the outside, she burns incense in a black pot, it smells strongly and sweetly. Once in a while, somebody comes by, they stand by the gate, and she walks over and talks quietly with them. Some of these are allowed inside the gate in the fence to sit in her chair and talk for a while. Meanwhile, she herself is laying on her palm leaf mat as she converses with her male guest. The guests are men of high prestige: this evening, among others, a Manga village chief who has "done" France as a soldier and twice been fighting in Indochina. Before I leave that evening, Mana dictates a letter to me that I am to write for her and read for one of her old lovers who lives in Garawa. The lover is a Manga merchant in Garawa, and she says, I must not read it while his two wives are listening, I must be careful when I arrive with the letter. She thinks often and with pleasure of that man and smiles while she dictates the letter in the Manga language. Finally she asks me to sign it; "*Madame Mana, Présidente de Isari*". As promised, I later read the letter to the merchant in Garawa, he is glad and embarrassed to receive this fine greeting from Isari.

Comments: Both women are (as *magajiyawa* should be) single and divorced, powerful women who are above average in their talents for trading and accumulating riches (partly obtained through own trade, partly through gifts from *karuwai*, partly through gifts from the customers of the latter). The *magajiyawa* are extroverts, authoritative, and expressive but

illiterate. They have distinct leadership qualities. Both own real chairs, unlike married women who do not. They live near the public market place where many strangers pass by. They have a central position in political ceremonies (as in case VI) as representative for all the women of their village. The *magajiya* masters the art of conversation with men and shows a kind of sophisticated "geisha" behaviour. They are "courtesans". They are cosmopolitans and belong to the elite of the village. They themselves may have male customers but choose among these. They govern with a sure hand their own relationships with men. Their *karuwai* cannot choose so freely. However, married men's contact with *magajiya* as well as *karuwai* should preferably be hidden from their wives (case IV). A *magajiya* may have children (Mana has a son) living with them but is never married during those years she holds the post as *magajiya*.

The *karuwa* groups of both *magajiyawa* are ethnically mixed with Fulani girls as well as Manga and Mobber girls. Fatima is a Fulani and Mana is a Manga but both speak several languages, including Hausa, which is the *lingua franca* in the area. Both for Garawa and Isari, the group of *karuwai* is too small to be divided and so there is only one leader, one *magajiya*. On the other hand, we see that in Maïné there are two *magajiyawa*, each with her own group of *karuwai*, divided along an ethnic line.

4.6. Bintu, a married woman becomes a *karuwa*

One of *Magajiya* Fatima's free girls of the Manga tribe is called Bintu. She is young, about 14 years of age, and has recently run away from her husband. She has left him for good. One evening, we heard a small procession of people in the dark of the night. They came to Garawa, carrying a lot of things. They turned out to be Bintu's mother and a couple of others who had walked up north to the village of Bintu's husband to carry back her dowry of household goods etc.

Bintu's mother was angry with her daughter but could do nothing. Bintu would not remain with her husband. My neighbours in Garawa who were of an age with Bintu were a little startled that evening. They said over and over again, "Bintu *shaky*". (Bintu is nitwit, disturbed), meaning that Bintu was behaving wrongly and like a spoiled child because she wanted a divorce.

Bintu, however, was firm in her decision and did not let herself be influenced. She got herself a hut in Garawa Anum and a contact with *Magajiya* Fatima from whom she sought protection. Bintu is now a *karuwa*. She receives male visitors in her cabin and receives money for that. My interpreter, the bachelor Bukar of 19 years of age, is one of her most frequent visitors but there are also other men. Bintu has kept her *dambu* hairstyle, which actually is the style for a married woman, she does not wear the "page-boy haircut" like Kurrati (case 4). But Bintu is often seen with Kurrati, they walk holding each other's shoulders and go visiting together.

Bintu is one of those women who always turn up in a central position when a girl of the village is getting married.

Comments: There are sanctions against a young, married woman running away from her husband when people, as in this case, can see no reason for it. It is the young wife who wants to enjoy herself or emancipate herself. The mother is angry but still gives a hand in bringing back the dowry. Bintu appears at the side of the bride of several weddings (case 1 and case 7). However, in her daily life, she associates with other *karuwai* and not with married women.

4.7. Kurrati and Aishata, two *karuwa* remarry

Kurrati appeared also in case 4 as a *karuwa*. But she changes from *karuwa* to *kamu*. It happens suddenly. One day Mastapha (case 4) is very nervous and sour. He is different. He has received some medicine to drink from a *malam* in the village: inky liquid from a Qur'an tablet. This medicine should give him strength. Then I hear that Kurrati, whom Mastapha had presented all of his dress material to, is going to be married to another man. Mastapha has not said a word to me. He just looks depressed. I hurry at the last moment to be present at the wedding, which has not been long in preparation. It turns out that Kurrati shall marry Garba, a water carrier in Garawa. Mastapha, Garba, and maybe a couple of others have been competitors in courting her.

The wedding is to be held in *Malam Lawan's* yard but there are only very few guests; as compared to the enormous wedding of Amina and Mammadu (case 1). The atmosphere is also quite different, it is now this evening – the same as any other evening – and there are very few gifts to be carried to the couple's new home: Garba's hut. Garba is the neighbour of *Magajiya Fatima*. Four to five middle-aged wives dance in front of Garba's hut, they wiggle their posteriors, and the situation is humorous and informal. A couple of Fulani women appear and sit besides the Manga women. There is no drum orchestra or women playing on kitchen utensils. There are only about 20 women here, compared to over 100 on Amina's wedding evening.

The next morning, Kurrati sits outside her new hut while the bridegroom Garba has gone to work as usual. He carries water in the village. This morning after the wedding, Kurrati wears a light blue dress (material, she has received from Mastapha). She has had her hair set in the *dambu* style with *kari kamallu* on her forehead. She sits on a mat at the entrance to the hut and gives out kolanuts to the six to seven female guests who have come to sit together with her. Bintu (case 6) sits nearest to Kurrati and the entrance of the hut.

A couple of days after the wedding, people in the village are saying that Kurrati is already talking back to Garba and scorns him in front of others and refuses to obey him. People are also saying that maybe the marriage is not going to last.

During the evenings following Kurrati's marriage, Mastapha – the rejected suitor – sits home, playing the lute. He is withdrawn and unapproachable. He mumbles that he wants some of his material and money back from Kurrati. (But what the result is to be, is unknown.) Mastapha just barely allows Garba to enter the yard with water for my jars. Garba, on the other hand, tells me that his sons, in any circumstances, must not take work as a cook when they grow up.

Aishata is a young Manga *karuwa*, about 20 years old, living in Maïné. She flirts with both local and strange men. She shouts, "*Mon mari, mon mari!*" to a European in the open street, smiling openly every time she sees him. Aishata has only a limited French vocabulary, such as "*mon mari*", "*monsieur*", "*bonjour, ça va?*", "*mademoiselle*", and "*ah, oui*". Once she received a sound beating from five women in Maïné because she was too popular with their husbands: a little too "good" a *karuwa*.

Aishata could only shout "*mon mari*" while she was *karuwa*. In 1968 she is married for the third time. (In between marriages she was *karuwa*.) The marriage marks an abrupt change in role for Aishata. From having been the popular *karuwa* of the Manga group in Maïné, and even having been beaten because of her popularity, charm, beauty, and extrovertness, Aishata changes totally over to a pretended bashfulness, demure, shy and soft speaking person.



Flirts in Mainé: two younger *karuwai* sit outside their hut conversing with two clients, a 'modern' young man with hat and a '*militaire*'. (Photo L.H.)

The day when the wedding procession marched through the town from the aunt's house to her new husband's house, approximately 40 women and girls form the procession (*Magajiya* Aisha, case VI, also participates). The females carry the many enamelled bowls, dishes, powder, and other things. Aishata, with a shawl over her head, is the last one in the procession. I have never before seen her so serious. She often looks down at the ground as the procession proceeds, and she does not reply to the shouts. When we arrive at Aishata's bridegroom's clay house and sit down on mats in the front yard, Aishata is not quite so bashful, she can smile a little but is still "shy". It is now evening and female Hausa *griots* come, sing, and beg for money.

When the bridegroom, Issa, comes home for a short while, accompanied by a friend, he does not walk all the way up to Aishata and she hardly looks at him. She sits surrounded by a couple of *karuwa* friends. The bridegroom is a young Hausa and is an official in Mainé. He always wears European shirts and trousers. On the wall he has pictures of football heroes and politicians.

On the morning after the wedding, Aishata seems content and happy when she greets Zubdu (case IV) and me. She looks just as happy as the virgin bride Amina (case 1) on the morning after her wedding did. Aishata kept indoors all day, entertained by some married women and girls. She is being domestic, cleans the bedroom, and straightens rugs and moves nails in the wall. She just remains for a short minute in the door opening while her new husband is quickly having lunch with his male friends in another room. Furthermore, she does not speak at all to her husband and his friends while they are there in their lunch break. She is still acting bashful, like the day before. In the afternoon she sits in another room together with the women and looks in the mirror and makes herself pretty: straightens her Hausa hairdo and put pomade into her nostrils. When she sees Zubdu and me out of the yard, she does not come as far as she used to do (before the wedding). She hurriedly runs back home again, wearing a shawl over her head.

The marriage between Aishata and Issa only lasts a few months, then Aishata once again returns to being a *karuwa*.

Comments on Kurrati: There is a distinct difference between this *karuwa* wedding and a *larisa* (case 1). This is an inter-ethnic wedding between a Dagara man and a Mobber woman and neither one have close relatives in Garawa. Kurrati's behaviour during the wedding procedure is marked by an abrupt change. She makes a sudden change to a nice and obedient wife for a couple of days, but reverts to the disobedient and independent style. It seems that she has had a strong position: has been able to manipulate the situation and taken advantage of there having been two eager suitors contesting for her. The example also shows how a rejected suitor shows bitter behaviour.

Comments on Aishata: This is another case of an inter-ethnic wedding. Aishata, a Manga woman marries Issa, a Hausa man. The change of roles that Aishata makes in the days around the wedding is very obviously formalised, ritualised. Furthermore, the example shows a relationship between a *karuwa* and a married woman, which is normally marked by avoidance – such that they do not visit each other. But in this case there is so much jealousy that it develops into a violent attack on a *karuwa* by *kamuwa*.

In both cases, concerning Kurrati and Aishata, their *karuwa* friends (and *magajiya*) appear centrally on the scene during the wedding ceremony itself (as in case 1) but after this, the *karuwai* disappear from the reach of the new *kamu*.

There is a difference between the two bridegrooms, Garba and Issa. The former is a traditional water carrier while the latter is an official and has a modern, western style of life, which gives high prestige. The two *karuwai*, Kurrati and Aishata, becoming *kamuwa* behave differently in their new roles. The prestige and money of the husband seem to have some influence on the extent of the woman's obedience and her inclination to live in *pardah*.

4.8. Yande, a widow

They call Yande, "Yande *Zawar*". She has received the nickname because she is a widow and as such *zawar*, which is a woman without a husband. She is a Manga and about 35 years old. Her husband died a couple of years ago and their only son, Dauda, 7 years old, lives with her. Yande takes part in the village celebrations, she sits with the married women of her own age. Still, it is as though she keeps a certain distance. On such occasions she sits farther away than anybody else from the wife of the village chief and other wives of high standing in the village.

Yande may or may not remarry. She is too young to be a *kumurjo* (old woman). Now she lives all alone since Dauda has been sent away from the village to start his first year in school in Mainé. He stays in a boarding school there. Dauda was one of the seven boys from Garawa who, in 1968, were picked to go to school. Yande was unhappy and fought for her son, the day that *Mai* Katiellu came to Garawa to inform the people of the new plans. She was the only woman who dared come to the open square where *Mai* Katiellu was speaking. She was accompanied by an older man from the neighbouring yard and did not go alone to the chief. She knelt down and asked that her son stay in Garawa. Her plea was not heard, however, Dauda must go to school. Yande was unhappy but powerless.

I spoke to people in Garawa about Yande, suggesting that maybe she lived alone and perhaps had no sexual relationship with men? The answer I received was, "But it is impossible for a woman to live without a man/men!" and "Yande is most likely not living a virtuous life either."

Comments: "*Zawar*" can, in the Manga language, become a woman's nickname. Being a widow and being a divorced woman both denote that the woman is *zawar*, whether she prostitutes herself or not.

A male neighbour accompanies Yande when she is to appear before the chief. This would not have been necessary had she been a *karuwa* under the *magajiya*. She is "honourable". On the other hand we have the remark that a grown woman cannot live alone. It is difficult, maybe impossible, to fit a virtuous *zawar* into the system. A woman, living independently of men is practically unthinkable in this culture (unless she is ill).

To have at least one child to run errands and go outside the home, is quite essential for an "honourable" woman. Thus it is imperative for Yande to keep her son who is an only child.

4.9. The bachelor Bukar narrates: The joke about the holy man and the *karuwa*

Bukar is my interpreter in Garawa, 19 years old and the son of a Manga chief from another village. He has been to school for five years and learned French there but ran away from school. In his native village, he has a fiancée who is 10 to 11 years old. He sees her when he goes visiting his parents and sends her greetings off and on when he is staying in other towns.

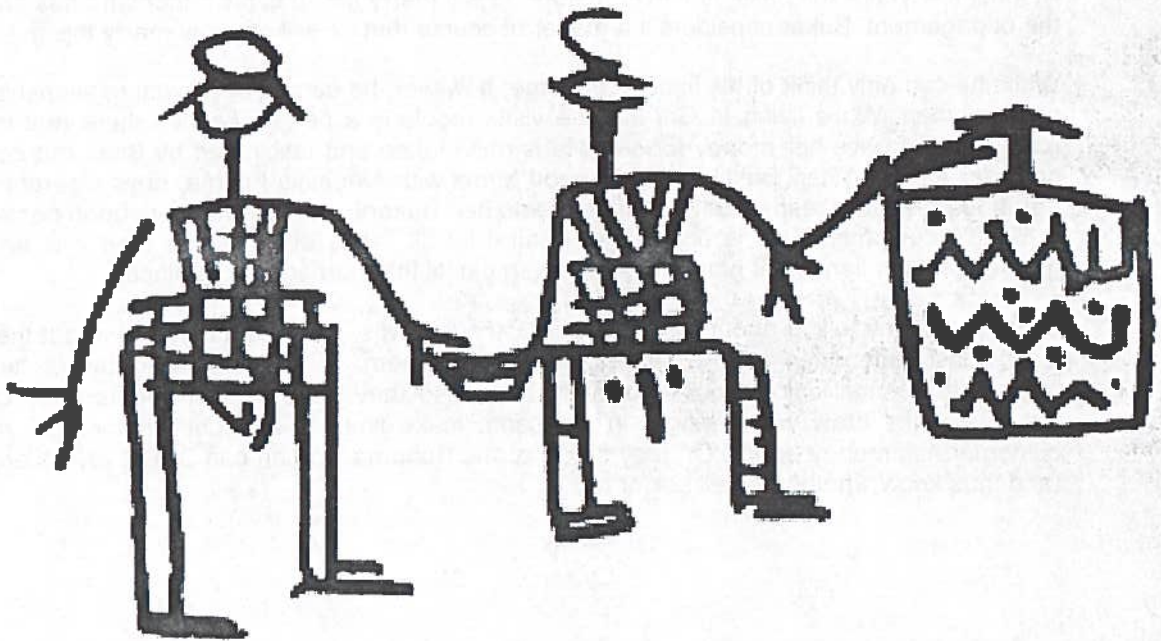
At least five years will pass, however, before he will marry her. It is his father who has arranged the engagement. Bukar considers it a matter of course that he will one day marry this girl.

While he can only think of his fiancée at home, however, he carries on sexual relationships with other women. While living in Garawa, he visits regularly a certain *karuwa* there that is Bintu (case 6), and pays her money for sex. He is quite taken and fascinated by Bintu but does not consider marrying her. Bukar stays on good terms with *Magajiya* Fatima, buys cigarettes from her, and greets her respectfully when he meets her. Bukar is not looked down upon because he is Bintu's customer. This is considered natural by all, while at the same time it is taken for granted that his fiancée at home remains a virgin until the marriage takes place.

Bukar is eagerly telling about the *karuwai* in various towns, what he has heard about them. He is obviously interested in the differences between them. "The Buduma²²*karuwai*," he says, "constitute a small colony in the town of Diffa. Also they have special talents, they can tell fortunes. They draw with a finger in the sand, make lines to find out whether the man or customer has money or not. Or, they say, that the Buduma woman can SEE it on his apparel." (and thus know whether to sell sex or not.)

22

Buduma, or Yedina as they call themselves, are fishermen on Lake Chad.



The man between the Qur'anic writing board, *alo* (H), and a woman. Fire incision on a calabash musical instrument by a Manga artist. (Photo L.H.)

Bukar tells me, not once but several times, the following joke, which he likes very much and he himself grins at each time:

Once there was a *malam* who sat in his yard and wrote from the Holy Book, the Qur'an. He was a man who did not deign to look at women. But one day a *karuwa* came to his yard and sat down on his mat while he was writing. She came a little closer. The *malam* wrote uninterruptedly on his tablet. But the *karuwa* came closer and closer and closer, and she lifted her dress. Finally the poor *malam* could no longer resist the temptation but had to make love to her.

Comments: Jokes are, of course, determined by culture and are not easily interpretable. But the point in the above quoted joke seems to be that it is a holy man who is tempted by a *karuwa* who by her sexual appeal has strength and power over him. This is what probably brings out the laughter in the Manga narrator and –listener. At the same time it is the woman and not the man who is the initiator in the story. A man has on one side his Qur'an tablet and on the other side his sexual life – but not at the same time.²³ I will go so far in my analysis as to claim that the same motive appears

- in Bukar's oral joke and
- in graphical form on a calabash instrument that I found in Garawa's neighbouring village of Adamdi. Into the calabash are burnt (by an

²³

See A. Cohen, 1969:58,

Thus, in effect every woman is a potential *bori* initiate and hence a disciple of Satan. This belief is mixed, in men's mind, with the Islamic attitude toward ritual purity and pollution. A man who performs the ritual ablution in preparation for prayer will have to perform the ablution once again if he even in the meantime talks with his wife, let alone comes into physical contact with her.

unknown artist) several motives, among others, a man who holds a Qur'an tablet in one hand and a woman in the other !

It is a dualistic model, representing the two essential things a man is preoccupied with: devotion to Islam and to love making. It corresponds to man Type I and man Type II. The two spheres, however, are opposed to one another. Still, both are "positive" for a man, provided he cleanses himself between the activities. It may be the local form for pornography on the calabash instrument ?

In a way, it is the good and the evil principles fighting against each other, with the evil one winning in Bukar's story. There are signs that women represent the Satanic elements in the world, and one of the duties of a *malam* is to work against Satan or evil spirits and those who are possessed by them.²⁴ It becomes a fight between the two sexes, especially between holy man and *karuwa*: man Type I and female B.

The young man, Bukar, who tells the joke about the *malam* and the *karuwa* tells it, maybe, exactly because – as far as he is concerned – he does not aspire to be man Type I but is in the process of becoming man Type II. Bukar is an aspirant to Type II, who typically have a chaste fiancée while at the same time he has sexual relations with women other than his fiancée. It is socially acceptable that he frequents *karuwai* both now in his bachelor stage and later on when he has become married. He is educated and has high prestige while his fiancée is illiterate

²⁴

See A. Cohen, 1969:58,

One of the most important missions of the *malamai* in Sabo and among the Hausa generally is to carry on the relentless battle against the spirits and those who perform the cult.

5. **Case studies from the village of Mainé**



Aerial view of the small town of Mainé Soroa. The settlements has 2000 inhabitants
(Photo M.B.)

5.1. Mayamaram and Ahmadu, an "initial wedding"

Amsa's 'daughter' Mayamaram shall be married a few weeks after she has finished school. Amsa received Mayamaram as a foster daughter from her brother at the time she should be weaned from the breast when she was two years old. Mayamaram is Manga and has gone to public school for a total of eight years. She has tried three times and still she has not passed the final examination. She is now married to Ahmadu, a young Hausa of approximately 20 years of age who comes from Zinder. He is a clerk at the post office in Mainé. This is also Ahmadu's first marriage.

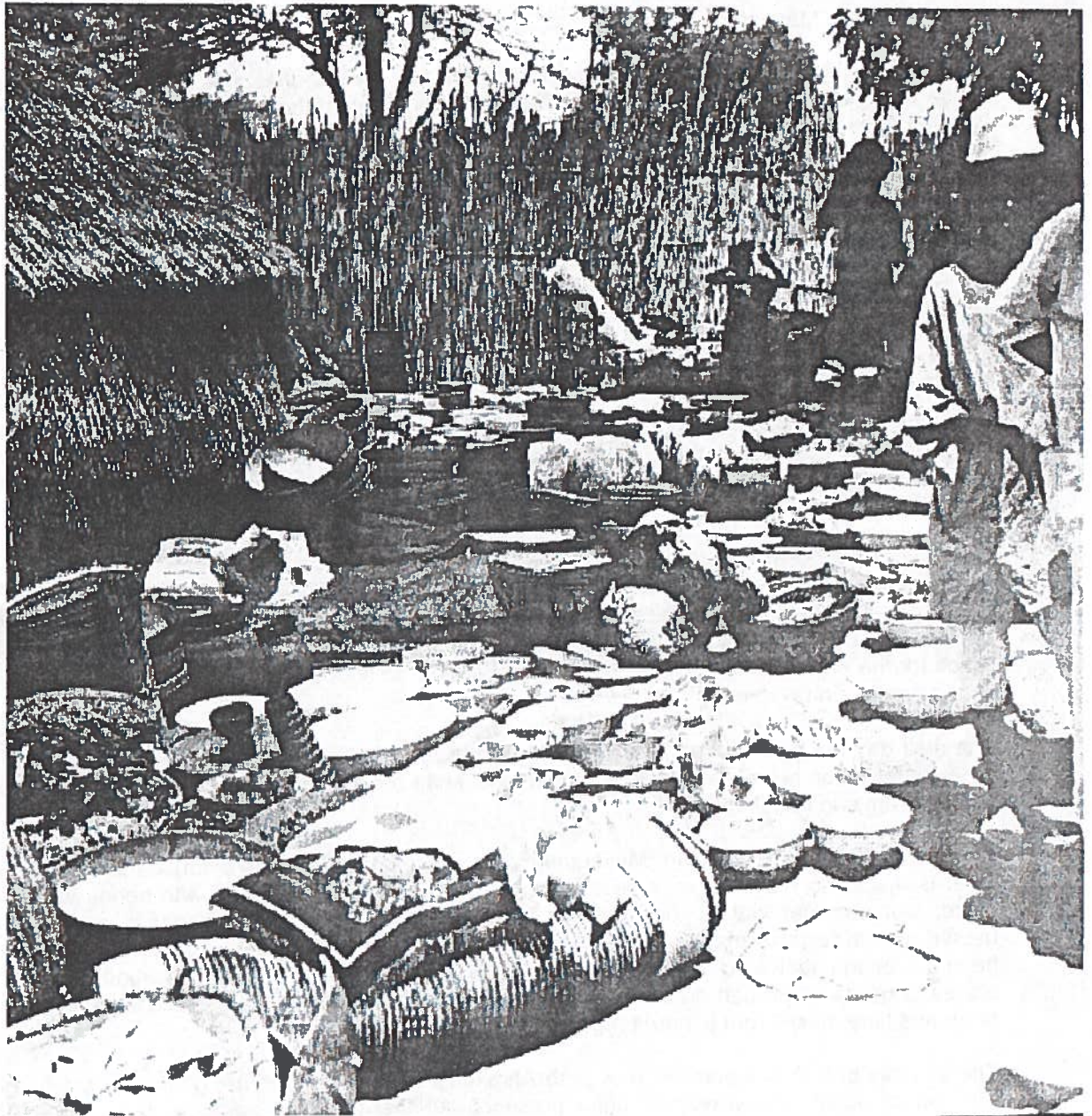
On Sunday, a week before Mayamaram shall be conducted to Ahmadu's home, the wedding festivities begin. The first thing that happens is that Ahmadu's friends (young married and unmarried officials in Mainé) put up a pergola in Amsa's yard, which Mayamaram's girlfriends (school mates) resolutely tear down. After many attempts, the young men are able to get the pergola to stand but for the entire following week there is a fight between these two groups: the bridesmaids and the bridegroom's friends. Every day, between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., Mayamaram sits under the pergola, in the centre, surrounded by her girlfriends. A battery record player, which they have borrowed from Ahmadu, continually plays American and French pop melodies, which the girls dance to.

One day during siesta time, the girlfriends run up to Ahmadu and his friends who are sitting playing cards. Mayamaram has sent them out to obtain money for kolanuts for Amsa. The girls begin to pull on the young men's watches and rings and ask for money. They are very forward and very nearly "aggressive". They shall have money for Amsa, they say. The "aggression", which for the entire time is playful, is also physical and develops into a type of "flirting" with the young men.

The next day the girls "abduct" Mayamaram after darkness has fallen. The young men search all over town for her. They finally find her and shall then pay ransom to the girls, so that Mayamaram can be taken home.

Three days before the wedding, Mayamaram moves to *Magajiya* Aisha's house (case VI). The latter is related to Mayamaram's best friend, Buaram. Here the anointing with henna will take place. Many women gather together and Mayamaram "simulates" unwillingness and covers herself with a piece of material while the women use force to anoint her hands and feet with henna. Ahmadu shall also be anointed with henna. This takes place at *Magajiya* Ladi's. At both places, a group of women dressed for celebrating, dance and shout to the accompaniment of drum and flute music from a three person orchestra.

The last day before Mayamaram moves to Ahmadu's house, she and her girlfriends are home with Amsa again. Many women bring presents. All the presents and the dowry given to Mayamaram by Amsa are "exhibited" in Amsa's yard: many enamel bowls and plates filled with rice, millet, onions, and other foodstuffs. In addition, there is a "canopied" bed and a little cupboard with plastic cups in it. (The only cupboard I saw in Mainé.) Two finely hand-embroidered suits and a horse, which is tied in the yard, is to Ahmadu from Amsa.



Wedding gifts for an initial wedding, *larisa*, displayed in the bride's family compound. The presents consist of household utensils like calabashes, enamelled bowls and pots, pillows and a real bed even (background), incense burners, foodstuff, etc (Photo M B)

On the wedding night itself, when Mayamaram is to be taken to Ahmadu's house, the "flirting" and the "aggression" between the bridesmaids and the bridegroom's friends reaches its climax

The bridegroom's friends are arrested by and pulled at by the girls. They want money, they say, lots of money. A violent discussion develops. The young men tease the girls, take them by the neck, so that they run around squealing. Finally the girls are given some money, and the men make their way towards the door behind which are Mayamaram and the women who are bathing her and getting her ready. They cannot open the door. Once again, they must bargain on a price. Finally the men make their way in to Mayamaram, - smelling of henna and perfume and who is all covered up - is carried out and put in one of the few trucks in the town. Overflowing with people, the truck is driven a couple of hundred meters to Ahmadu's house, where the bride is laid down on a mat. The bridesmaids settle down in the yard and to the bridegroom's friends they insist on staying in the yard with the bridal couple that night. Early the next morning, Mayamaram runs home to Amsa. The girls at once take her back to Ahmadu. Later in the day, Mayamaram sits in the house, dressed in fine, new clothes, which she had received from Ahmadu. The girls surround her. Mayamaram's brothers and sisters and some elderly women come and go. Some small girls dance and some boys play cards. Suddenly Ahmadu comes home, accompanied by his friends who say, "*Bonjour Madame*" to Mayamaram. Afterwards they go into one of the three small rooms of the house where they wait for the food, which the girlfriends are preparing. About 11 o'clock, a female *griot* is sent throughout the town to say that all the gifts at Amsa's should be collected and brought to Ahmadu's home.

The next five months - up to the time I left - one does not see Mayamaram outside the house. As she is newly wed, she must not go outside and she herself says that she must not visit her mother for one year. After that she is welcome to do so if Ahmadu gives permission. She speaks gladly about her relatives and about the house but becomes shy and silent when one mentions Ahmadu. That is shameful, she says. I cannot find out if she herself has taken part in the decision, concerning her marriage to him.

Mayamaram herself says that she does not think it enjoyable to be married. "I cannot go any place at all," she says. She has got a "boy" who shall help her with food preparation. Mayamaram's biological little sister of 6 years has also arrived from her real parents in a village to the west. She shall now live together with Mayamaram and Ahmadu. Mayamaram has received her sister as a foster daughter. The little sister runs errands for Mayamaram, gets spices and such at the market, gets her "brothers" if she wants to be visited *etc.* All day long Mayamaram sits in the house and plays records on Ahmadu's gramophone.

When Ahmadu comes home, one can see that he forces himself to speak in a hard and authoritative tone to Mayamaram and she humbly waits on him.

Comments: Mayamaram and Ahmadu's marriage has several features which are characteristic for a traditional "initial marriage". The celebrations stretched over a period of 8 days and many presents and payments were exchanged (as in case 1). But several new elements have appeared: even though Mayamaram herself will not say anything about how the decision concerning the wedding was taken, it is likely that Amsa and the stepfather, *Alhaji Korra*, have not made the decision completely without Mayamaram's approval. Also, it is an inter-ethnic marriage. Ahmadu, who is Hausa and from another town and does not have relatives in Mainé, has been permitted to marry (in *larisa*) a Manga girl. This reflects the important position that a young minor official in Mainé has.

We have seen that the wedding celebration gives the young bridesmaids and the bridegroom's friends an opportunity for ritual communication and play, which otherwise would not be allowed. One can say that the girls act exactly opposite to the womanly ideals. This contributes to stress

the importance of the *larisa*, also as a type of *initiation* for the young woman. (We shall, below, return to this aspect of *larisa*.)

Mayamaram was driven by truck to the bridegroom's house (while brides in Garawa are brought on the back of dromedaries to the bridegroom's hut), and she has a "boy" to do the housework for her. Both of these are prestige-giving in Mainé. But after the wedding, Mayamaram sits more alone and inactive than she would have done after a normal traditional wedding. She has gained ideal femininity through her initial wedding, while she is still a virgin. But because Ahmadu, as an official, seeks to prove his masculinity by having a wife who, in her behaviour, shows ideal traditional behaviour, *i.e.* is in *purdah*, the marriage has – for Mayamaram – caused her to have a reduced action radius. This marriage has brought with it a gain in femininity, but a reduction in possibilities for activities.

Mayamaram is older (*cf.* case 1) than the average age for a marriageable girl. The reason for this is that she has gone to school. It is characteristic in Mainé, that a young girl gets married very soon after having finished school. There is no acceptable female status between the school and marriage. An informant also explained why he married off his very beautiful daughter even before she had finished her schooling. "I was afraid that she should become pregnant and become *karuwa*." To become *karuwa* before the first marriage is completely unacceptable. This same daughter has run off from her official husband and is a highly sought after *karuwa* in Mainé in 1970.

The example of Mayamaram also shows how the mother, in this case the foster mother, can gain feminine prestige by organising the practical carrying out of the daughter's initial marriage. The large dowry, which she gives Mayamaram and the horse to the son-in-law, is manifestations of her great trade abilities and generosity. As we see, it is of great importance for Mayamaram that she gets a foster child, whom she – as a secluded woman – can use to maintain contact with the outside world (*cf.* Faji's daughter Amina in case 1 and Yande's son Dauda in case 8).

5.2. *Alhaji* Hassan's wife Umma, a married woman in seclusion

Alhaji Hassan is Bambara and approximately 50 years old. He is a tailor, kolanut seller, and a *malam*. He would like to be a rich and very holy man. He lives in a clay house in one of the newer sections of town. The house is near a little mosque, which he oversees. Hassan has at this time one wife, Umma, who is Fulani. She has once been married to a Fulani. Hassan and Umma have five children together. Four of these live with them. Their eldest son was sent to his mother's parents at the time of weaning. "They didn't have anyone to help them in the fields," says Hassan.

Some years ago, Hassan had been married to Margaram, a Manga woman, who is the sister to one of the richest merchants in town. Margaram and Hassan's son lives in Margaram's brother's large household. He now goes to school in Mainé. Margaram, who is *karuwa*, lives in a little clay house close to the market and her brother's house. She lives alone with her son of a couple of years of age, whom she has by the male nurse *Alhaji* Usuman.

Hassan has also had other wives. One has left him only a couple of months ago. But Hassan is always on the outlook for another wife. "Umma has too much to do alone," he says. During the day he is always sitting in his little room, which opens out into the street. There is a sewing machine and a large sack of colanuts in the room. Hassan seldom goes outside of his house. In

the evening he either sits or lies on the "veranda" in front of the house and one can hear all those passing by greeting him. In the course of the day, many enter into the room where he sits. Women come with material which they want made into dresses. They purchase some colanuts and get a little gossip. Hassan is also visited by his special friends: the party chairman, the interpreter at the *sous préfecture*, and an old war veteran. They all can speak French and Hassan identifies himself with them and appears together with them at official functions: end of school term, party meetings *etc.*, even though he does not have an official position like they do. He himself only knows broken French. On the other hand, he wears a white silk scarf around the head, this being a sign that he has been to Mecca.

By his place at the sewing machine, Hassan has a hole in the clay wall from which he can see into the yard and observe any visitors arriving. From here he can also call for Umma if he wants water. Umma is in seclusion, *purdah*. I only saw her twice outside her home. The first time was when she was giving birth and was in hospital. Hassan was very dissatisfied with this. "Who shall look after the house?" he asked. He had to be persuaded to give his permission. When Umma was ready to be released from hospital, she protested wildly. She enjoyed the companionship there and did not want to go home right away. Otherwise Umma does not show and dissatisfaction with her situation. She is married to a great and holy man. He sees to it that she has clothes – and she has born him four sons. Umma is always busy preparing meals, feeding the children, or filtering the sand in the yard. Other women frequently visit her.

Several times Hassan's sister has come visiting from N'Guigmi with her 3-year-old son. The sister is *hajiya* and has, like Hassan, been to Mecca. There she had made a couple of gold teeth, so that everyone may see that she has been on a pilgrimage. During the day she often sits with her brother, with Umma, or on the veranda with other women and talks.

Close to Hassan lives *Alhaji* Mustapha, a great Fulani *malam*, who has four wives in seclusion. He has been no less than four times to Mecca. Hassan tells that once they were friends but now Mustapha has become too "good" for Hassan. He no longer comes visiting with Hassan as he used to do. "*Alhaji* Muštapha is related to N.N. (one of Niger's highest politicians), and therefore he has 'received' his travels and his position as *qadhi* (Qur'an knowledgeable judge) in the *sous préfecture*," Hassan hints.

Comments: A woman at the age when she can bear children, can only achieve ideal femininity through one or more marriages. Her status as a married woman is dependent upon the husband's status and the way the husband treats her. However, depending on the means by which men compete for rank, there will in certain instances be limitations as to the situation of the woman, *i.e.* ban against moving outside the household, seclusion *etc.* Umma has been married once before and she may have been a *karuwa*. She has now become married to Hassan. The advantages offered by marriage to Hassan are as follows:

- They live in a clay house and have a big yard surrounded by a wall.
- Hassan is relatively well off, which means that she gets dresses and presents.
- Hassan pays for his field to be cultivated so that Umma will not have to take part in the rough field work.
- Hassan's position as a *malam* and a pilgrim enables him to equate himself with officials at public functions.

In order to prove Hassan's masculinity and holiness, Umma must keep more in isolation than most women must. She does not consider seclusion as an unconditional advantage, which is

made evident by her protests when she is to be discharged from hospital. The frequent visits made by women, however, strengthen her position among the women in town.

It appears from Hassan's plans for more wives in seclusion and from the effort represented by a journey to Mecca that Hassan wants to be a holy man (man Type I). His description of "the friend" Mustapha who had "cheated" his way to Mecca is another indication of this. It is quite obvious that Mustapha has achieved higher prestige as a holy man than Hassan has.

Hassan's sister has a position quite different from Umma's. She appears together with her brother and walks freely in town. The brother-sister relationship is not subject to the same rules as a husband-wife relationship. Also, a *hajiya* is something special, it is very rare for a woman to achieve this title.

5.3. Adama and Ambalam, two *karuwai*

Adama and Ambalam are two Fulani girls, 16 and 18 years old respectively. They have recently come to Mainé from villages in the bush. They have run away from their husbands. Adama left because her husband was old. She had been given away in *auren sadaka* (charity marriage) to an old *malam*. Ambalam said that she wanted to come to Mainé because she had seen other young women who had run away from their husbands come back from Mainé with presents, perfume, and other things to the family in the bush.

In the beginning, Adama and Ambalam live in Fanta's house in *Sabon Gari*. Together with other *karuwai* they are given food and housing for a price. Fanta is a big, fat, and not particularly beautiful *karuwa*. Also, she is a bit older than the other girls are. The girls spend most of the day at Fanta's or they sit in groups sewing under a shelter in the street near by. From here, they can see and make contact with people passing by. Inside Fanta's house, the girls fool about and chatter like children. They lie up against each other, touch each other's arms and legs, and steal each other's headscarves. Men come and go. Two young men come into the room and sit down between the girls on mats. One produces a mirror and paints himself to attract the girls, he is a Fulani man. The two men start fooling around with the girls.

Fanta is sitting on the bed with a 2-year-old boy. He is her son. At the time of weaning, some months ago, he was sent away to her family in the bush as a foster child, but Fanta's mother came to Mainé with him today because he is ill.

Later on, Adama and Ambalam are sitting with Fati, a 17 year old Manga *karuwa* under the shelter in the street. Adama says to Fati, "You are black." Then the two of them hold their arms up towards each other. Fati is a bit lighter than Adama who is very dark. Later on, in the conversation, Adama says to Fati about Fati's mother, "She is a *karuwa* !" "No," says Fati. "Why do you say no ?" Adama insists. "Your mother has not husband." The two *karuwai* start tearing at each other's arms, glowering at each other. Fati obviously considers it an insult when Adama accuses her mother of being a *karuwa*. Fati smokes cigarettes and is more experienced and forward than are Adama and Ambalam who have just arrived. Fati is cleverer in contacting the young men who have cash. All three of them spend the money they have left over to buy material for dresses, perfume, and sandals.

Some months later, Adama and Ambalam tell that Fanta has gone to the neighbouring town of Diffa, her "man" had gone to Diffa, they explained. The two of them now live in a small straw hut next to another Fulani *karuwa* in *Sabon Gari*. They rent a hut from a Manga merchant. They sit

sewing *faifai* in the shade of the hut. A young man visits the neighbouring girl. He throws himself on her mat, lays his head in her lap, and then later disappears inside the hut with her.

Comments: Adama and Ambalam are examples of typical recruits to *karuwa* occupation. They have been married at an early age while they were still unaware of their possibilities in rank. They then are tempted when they see the richness of presents and fine clothes brought back to their villages by other women and they sever their relationship with their husbands and try the new life in the town. In Mainé they join together with other *karuwai*. The common household is organised by the best established *karuwa*, Fanta. The social intercourse among *karuwai* is characterised by teasing, physical play, and light conversation, which without difficulty can be joined in by visiting men, most often bachelors.

When they arrive, Adama and Ambalam have no other resources than their attractiveness and their potential trading abilities. They try to manage with the gifts and money that are given to them by men. The surplus they have, they invest in dresses to make themselves pretty. As newly arrived, it is important that they manage to make contact with men, either in Fanta's house or in the street. It is quite normal that the very young *karuwai* almost completely base their income on contact with men. Most *karuwai* in Mainé are between 15 and 30 years old.

During the conversation with Fati, Adama shows that she is jealous of her. A light complexion is an explicit ideal for women in the area and as such is an important resource for a *karuwa*. It is evident that the light complexioned *karuwai* are very popular with the men and they receive the most marriage offers. The claim that Adama brings forward about Fati's mother being a *karuwa* may have one of several possible explanations:

- (1) it may be an example of the teasing relationship common between Manga and Fulani, or
- (2) it may be an indication of rivalry, which often takes place quite openly between on the one hand Manga *karuwai* and on the other Hausa and Fulani *karuwai* and which may be caused by the difference in success with important men.

We can only guess at which way the teasing of Adama is meant. The only thing we can say with any certainty is that if one person accuses another person's mother of being a *karuwa*, it evokes anger. However, we do not know whether the implication in this is that the person herself has been conceived before an initial marriage. By her teasing, Adama reveals an envy at the other one's larger experience, success, and light complexion.



A beautiful, young independent woman, *karuwa* (Photo M.B.)

Fanta is in a different situation from the newly arrived *karuwai*. In addition to financial income as a *karuwa* hostess, she has a "permanent" relationship to a man. The relationship is so permanent that she moves when he leaves Maïné. Fanta, who is neither quite young nor particularly beautiful, would have more difficulties than the others would if she were to base herself on many relationships to men. She adds to her income by being an organiser for the other *karuwai*.

5.4. Zubdu, the independent *karuwa*

Zubdu is a beautiful, light-skinned woman of 21 years. The fact that she is highly sought after by the men in Maïné proves that her beauty is most exceptional. She helps at the hospital in the examination of small children and sees that diets for especially sick patients are proper. Zubdu has gone to the public school and in addition to French, she can speak Manga, Fulfulde, Hausa, and a little Djerma. Zubdu married an official shortly after she finished going to school and she had two children in this marriage. The family lived for a time in the capital city Niamey. The eldest child, upon weaning, was given to the husband's parents out in the bush. When it was discovered that the husband was embezzling, he committed suicide. Zubdu has since her husband's death, given birth to two children. Officials that she has associated with as *karuwa* fathered both. Her mother also lives with her. The father of her third child was the director of the secondary school he left about two years ago. Abdu, who is currently the leader of a newly established institute, fathered the fourth child, Nana. Abdu is unmarried and is the only one in Maïné with an academic education. He is a Tukuleur and comes from another part of Niger. He has given Zubdu a little clay house and he slaughtered a sheep at Nana's name-giving ceremony as a sign that he acknowledges his paternity. When he has the opportunity, he proudly shows Nana off and says that she is his daughter. He says that he will not marry Zubdu before he is married to his fiancée, who is attending senior high school in the large town of Zinder. Zubdu always goes around with little Nana on her back. She is still being breast fed. At the hospital and in the town, Zubdu talks openly with both men and women. The men often flirt with her, saying they want to marry her *etc.* When there is a party in town, Zubdu is always there to dance, the same as other *karuwai*. Otherwise she is not seen together with *karuwai* but is, instead, together with other women working at the hospital.

It is morning. Ari is in the bar. Ari, who is a Fulani of chieftain kin and educated as a nurse, is an alcoholic. He has three wives and 14 children. The bar is a straw hut where a young Fulani sells Fanta, Cola, and beer. It is a young, active Fulani woman who owns and operates the bar. She is married to Maïné's only permanent European settler. Zubdu comes to the bar. Ari touches her. They chatter and hold each other, take each other by the hands. They talk about the hospital. Then Ari says to her, "Go with me!" "No," replies Zubdu, "I will not!" Ari says that he can go home with her. She then asks him whether he has any money. He smiles and says, "What will my wives say and do to you if they saw that?" He turns to the others present in the bar and says, "A man just shakes a leg at her and she becomes pregnant!" This he demonstrates by holding out his trousers and shaking his leg. "That doesn't work ... If each sleeps in his own bed and if one just steps over her at night without touching her, she will become pregnant just the same."

Comments: Zubdu has more resources than do the majority of *karuwai*. In addition to being young, light skinned, and pretty, she is compared to the majority of the other *karuwai*, educated at school and has, as a result of her knowledge, gotten a job at the hospital where she has contact with officials. She has also lived for a while in Niamey. These resources put her in the position of obtaining the highest rank of all *karuwai* in town. She has an unambiguous contact

with one of the important men in town. He takes care of her and acknowledges his child. Zubdu and Nana confirm Abdu's potency and masculinity as long as he is not married to her as it would not be the ideal marriage for Abdu. The ideal wife for Abdu is a young girl who has not been married before – and that is a resource Zubdu lacks. Therefore, it is most likely that Zubdu will continue to have contacts with officials who temporarily stay in Mainé, as long as she is young and pretty. Later, when she becomes older and her attractiveness lessens, she can choose between devoting herself entirely to her job at the hospital, engaging in some type of trade, or becoming married to an elderly man who already has several wives, or who has been married before. The choice she makes, depends upon the resources she has accumulated during the time she was a *karuwa*.

The meeting in the bar between Ari and Zubdu is an example of how the contact between a *karuwa* and a married man develops. Zubdu shows that for a *karuwa* the important thing is to gain an economic advantage if she is to become involved with a man. Ari gives a hint that he takes a risk of being sanctioned by his wives if he was to spend money for a *karuwa*. This would attack their femininity. A married man's contact with a *karuwa* should preferably not take place openly, so that the wife or wives know about it (as in case 5).

5.5. Melle and Malam Umaru, two men who have contact with *karuwai*

Melle is a school teacher at *école primaire*. He is married to a beautiful Fulani woman who has just now given birth to a second child. According to *Alhaji* Hassan, she was previously a much sought after *karuwa* when he met her.

The principal of the girls school is a beautiful, young Hausa woman of 21 years. She has never been married. She is one of the extremely few women in Niger who, after primary school, has gone on to secondary school and then a two-years teacher training college in Zinder. Melle, in talking about women teachers, says contemptibly that they are especially bad and the principal is "*karuwa*: she is together with different men."

Bullama is a large, good looking and "grown" Fulani boy in Melle's class. Everybody knows that Melle often sends him out to arrange rendezvous for him with *karuwai*.

Malam Umaru says that he is the town's oldest man. He looks to be about 80 – 90 years old. He has been married to many women. At the moment he has only one wife and she is in *pardah*. She is very young. Their two small daughters run around in the little front house where he is always sitting. *Malam* Umaru got his wife in *sadaka* (charity) from a friend who is her *luwali*. The wife is not normal. She does not keep the house or the children clean and she glares very hard at one when they come into the enclosed yard where she always stays. *Malam* Umaru's other wives are either dead or have taken off. He says that he has been married with many *karuwai*. "A *karuwa* always runs off," he says, "but she cannot take the children with her." He also tells that one can be certain that there will be a hullabaloo if one has several wives. To the question of whether it is wrong for a man to visit a *karuwa*, he answered, "It is only a *malam* who despises and must not visit a *karuwa*, but he does it just the same."

Comments: Melle through his statement expresses that the ideal woman is the married woman. However, an important point to be shown her is that Melle, an educated official, has married a previously very highly sought after *karuwa*. This demonstrates that as a *karuwa*, Melle's wife was able to gain resources which she was able to demonstrate to all the men in Mainé, and this an honourable, married woman could not do. Melle, in having married her, has

proven his masculinity to all the men in Mainé, as they have previously known of and about his wife's resources. The educated, unmarried woman in his eyes does not possess the ideal femininity. Melle's frequent contact with *karuwai* does not cause any reduction in his masculinity. As many officials do, he sends a "messenger" to arrange rendezvous or he arranges dates through the *magajiya*. He does not himself go to the girls as the "common" man or a bachelor does.

Malam Umaru makes it clear that there is an *explicit* moral ban on a holy man (man Type I) visiting *karuwai* (as was related in case 9). It is quite clear the he, like *Alhaji Hassan* (case II), has tried to have many wives. But he has had difficulties, especially in keeping the younger wives. The older wives he has had are dead now. His religious prestige, masculinity, and sexual attractiveness are no longer great enough for him to be able to hold on to the young, beautiful wives. (Elderly widows or single women, *kumurjo*, do not have to marry a man to obtain feminine prestige. They settle down with a son or daughter in whose household they always have great authority, and on the side they carry on some type of trade or craft activity.) *Auren sadaka* (charity marriage) has made it possible for *Malam Umaru* to prove his masculinity; even if the young girl was difficult to be married off because of a physical or mental handicap – it is a way out for a *luwali*. *Malam Umaru* has through *auren sadaka* got a wife who is willing to stay in seclusion and who bears children. Her resources are so small that she will not be able to take care of herself as a *karuwa*. Therefore, it is most unlikely that she will leave.

5.6. *Magajiya Ladi* and *Magajiya Aisha* – the leaders of the *karuwai*

In Mainé, there are two *magada*, *Magajiya Ladi* and *Magajiya Aisha*. *Ladi* is Hausa and *Aisha* is Manga. As we have described above, each is elected by her group of *karuwai* to become their leader and the local party committee approves. Mainé's *karuwai* are divided into two groups, based upon their ethnic origin. *Magajiya Ladi* is the leader of the Fulani and Hausa *karuwai* (pre-marital sexual relations permitted) while *Magajiya Aisha* heads the Manga, Mobber, and other Kanuri *karuwai* (pre-marital sexual relations forbidden).

It is the *magajiya* who defends and secures the *karuwa*'s position against the men – and as often happened, it is she who arranges the contacts. Both *magada* live near the market place, which is the town's gathering place. Here, they have close contact with men in town as well as with men who are in Mainé for a short time only, *i.e.* traders, drivers, military men, *etc.* *Magajiya Ladi* and *Magajiya Aisha* are both approximately 40 years old, unmarried (divorced), and economically independent. They are both socially accepted and able to move freely in the town where they talk to everybody, men, as well as women. One does not see them often in the yards of married women who are in *purdah* but they do have more contact with married women than do *karuwai*. *Magajiya Ladi* often sits under her lean-to in front of her house. She greets everybody who passes by. One or several men sit on the mat beside her.



One of the two *magajiya* in Maïné, standing in front of her compound. She is a wise and grand lady. (Photo L.H.)

At official, festive occasions where men from the town gather, *Magajiya* Ladi and *Magajiya* Aisha are there, each with her own group of *karuwai*. During October 1970, Niger's President Diori Hamani came on a visit to Maïné. The two *magada* appear at the head of the *karuwai* in town – all dressed in similar blue Manga frocks (both the Manga and Hausa/Fulani girls). The

next day, they travel in a truck to Diffa, the neighbouring town to meet the President once again there – together with the *magada* and *karuwai* from Diffa.

When ministers visit, the *magajiya* with her *karuwai* take part in the celebrations of the evening. Married women do not take part in such events.

The men in Maïné often stress the differences between Manga and Fulani *karuwai*. The Fulani are presently the most sought after. "They are the prettiest and they are the first to accept that which is modern," explained a Manga school leader, "but they are difficult to keep. They are nomads and one day disappear without fail." In addition to these differences there is also a difference in sexual habits. With both the Hausa and Fulani, sexual contact between the young before marriage is quite normal, while this is strictly forbidden among the Manga. This difference is also given expression through visual idioms as well as different dress and hairstyles.

"*Msjœ*" Kiari is a very old Manga farmer. He was the first one in Maïné to learn French from the French in the beginning of the century. "*Msjœ*" Kiari says "there has always been a *magajiya* in Maïné. But in earlier times when there was a wedding, she was *la grande fille* and she took care of all the unmarried girls (virgins) whom she gathered together to dance. Upon such an occasion, the girls gave her a gift. At that time, they were not 'prostitutes'. If a woman became divorced at that time, her father came at once and held guard over her. It is not like that today." (It is officially prohibited today for *karuwai* to give the *magajiya* gifts.)

Comments: The most conspicuous feature concerning the organisation of *karuwai* in Maïné is that they are divided into two groups, each under the leadership of their *magajiya*, and that this division is based on ethnic affiliation. The many new economic possibilities for men in Maïné have brought a feeling of solidarity among *karuwai*, which cuts across the ethnic ties. On the other hand, Manga and Fulani women who are *karuwai* continue to play out traditional feminine roles which are somewhat different for the two groups. The differences can be observed in the hair styles and clothing and are confirmed by talk about the different sexual qualities and skills. But when the entire area, *La Mangarie*, shall be represented at the President's visit, all of the *karuwai* are, as an exception, dressed as one: like Manga.

The *magajiya*'s position and importance as well as the role the *karuwa* and the *magajiya* play at official functions, all contribute to make the *karuwa* institution a real legal alternative to marriage for the woman in Maïné. A woman cannot obtain complete, ideal femininity as *karuwa* but enough 'real' femininity. The *karuwa* has the advantage that she is free to decide and to make contact with men. This in itself carries the possibility for a better marriage than the one, which the *karuwa* has left – on the condition that she is in possession of a certain minimum of resources. In their daily lives, many *karuwai* are only to a very small extent dependent on concrete contact with the *magajiya*. When a marriage takes place, the *magajiya* often 'leads' the *karuwa* into her new status (Aishata, case 7).

"*Msjœ*" Kiari's statement reflects the development which is shown above, namely that the chaste divorced woman, *zawar*, practically does not exist any longer in Maïné – and that the *magajiya* in Maïné of today is the undisputed leader for the *karuwai*. These *karuwai* can have connections with many men or just one.

5.7. Fajimata, a married woman becomes *karuwa*

Musaram is a middle-aged Manga woman who has grown children. She lives in the Manga quarter next to her brother Mukhtar who is a *malam*. Mukhtar's wife, Fajimata, a young Manga woman, is in *pardah*. Mukhtar and Fajimata's two small children can always be found at Musaram's. One of them is Musaram's foster child. One day, when I am visiting with Musaram, she tells me that the children much preferred to stay with her rather than with their mother. She also says that Fajimata quarrels a lot with Mukhtar and that they are on bad terms with each other. Shortly afterwards I learn from Musaram that Fajimata has left, that she now lives with her mother, and that Mukhtar is waiting in hopes that she will return home.

Some days later, I meet Fajimata together with a group of Manga *karuwai*. They are dressed up and on their way to town. Fajimata has established herself in *Sabon Gari*, together with several *karuwai*. When I visit them, I find them lounging on a mat in the hut and Fajimata is happy and radiant. Two other girls, together with two uniformed young men, are sitting across from her. Fajimata has adopted the 'page-boy' hairstyle²⁵ and is wearing the headscarf in a new style in a little top, which comes all the way to the forehead. She says that she did not like her husband and that she has met a handsome young man with whom she is expecting a child. "Married women who are alone home, are often visited by another married man," she says.

Comments: The difficulties in the marriage cause Fajimata to leave her husband and children. Musaram plays down in her comments the fact that Fajimata has become a *karuwa* and says instead that she has moved home to her mother which would have been the ideal thing to do. Fajimata has in a short time adopted the idioms which are characteristic for her new status. She conducts herself in a new way, goes about, is visited by men, etc.

5.8. *Alhaji* Usuman and *Alhaji* Korra, two men marry *karuwai*

Alhaji Usuman is 36 years old, Manga, and a nurse. He has at the moment two Manga wives. One of them, he married at his *larisa*. She is now *kamu kurra*. He married the other one some years later. He has 13 children by these two wives. Six months ago, Usuman got married to a Fulani *karuwa* who did not have any children. She lived in his household for two months. Then she disappeared. Since then, Usuman has never talked about her.

One day *Alhaji* Usuman comes and tells that he is going to get married to Margaram. He has had connections with her for a long time and has a son by her. Usuman has now made an agreement with Margaram's brother, Badao, who is Margaram's *luwali*, that he is to pay him Nigerian £ 20. The marriage ritual takes place at the market one evening after the 7.30 p.m. prayer in the mosque. There are only men present. First, a discussion on the agreed bride price takes place between Badao and *Alhaji* Korra, Usuman's friend and colleague. After that, Korra cites verses from the Qur'an and the ritual ends with Korra passing around colanuts to all those present. Usuman is not present in person. The whole ritual has taken about five minutes. When it is over, everyone rises and leaves. After that, many women from all directions come flocking

²⁵ The hairstyle is for both groups different from that worn by married women. Manga *karuwai* have braiding in the 'page-boy style', while Fulani/Hausa *karuwai* have braiding which meets on top of the head, or braids which start from the forehead going down to the neck. The two styles mentioned are also used by both Manga and Fulani girls in the school. In May 1970, there were five Manga girls attending school who still had the traditional 'three-headed' hairstyle – in autumn 1970, there were none to be seen.

to Badao's house to greet Margaram who is sitting there. The *magada*, *karuwai*, Korra's wives, and others come. Both of Usuman's wives are angry because he has married Margaram. They have boycotted him completely since they found out about his proposed marriage some days ago. "It is unbearable," he says when I am visiting. He says that he does not know where they have gone. When they, a little later come home, they stride by without a passing glance. For several weeks after the wedding, Usuman complains about the wives, that they do not answer him, etc. By the time of my departure from Mainé, Margaram had still not moved to his home, two months after the wedding.

Usuman's friend, *Alhaji* Korra, is a big, fat Manga who is approximately 40 years old. He has four wives. He has just recently married the fourth one: an elderly *karuwa* who is a girl friend of one of his other wives who earlier had also been a *karuwa*. When she moved to live at home with the two other wives, they threw *fai-fai* into her face and tore at her. They were furious. *Alhaji* Korra's third wife, Amsa, lives by herself (she appears in case I). Every evening, when darkness falls, Korra goes to town. He passes by *Alhaji* Hassan's house (case II). They greet each other. "He always goes to town, he visits the girls", says Hassan. Korra himself is eager to give the impression that he has great potency. He asks my husband, time after time, whether he does not have some medicine which can make him even "stronger". Korra's four wives roam freely in the town and around the market place. Amsa, who has a separate household, is a very active tradeswoman, she has her own field, which she sees properly farmed. Every Wednesday, the market day, she can be seen sitting in her permanent place in the market where she sells paprika and onions.

Comments: Both Usuman and Korra have been to Mecca and still, they identify themselves with man Type II (the 'woman hunter'). They seek to strengthen their masculinity by marrying several wives and by maintaining contact with *karuwai*, as well as by having many children. In addition, they both have status as officials. They have gone through "the initiation" of *larisa* and can therefore marry *karuwai* (Abdu, case IV). The ceremony at such second, third, or fourth marriage has quite different proportions from that of a *larisa* and is much simpler. Neither does a *karuwa* marriage have the same consequences for the status of those involved as a *larisa* does for the young woman and man. But getting more wives can involve difficulties - Usuman's two wives contribute in a high degree to his prestige: one is his wife from *larisa* and both of them have born many children. Thus, they have good possibilities to sanction him if he does anything, which they disagree with, especially if they feel that their autonomy is threatened, by having a strange woman joining the household. Usuman risks that Margaram will run off - and that would be a clear loss of prestige.

The fact that Usuman wants a third wife causes the other two to band together in solidarity. A woman who is married to a "great" man of either man Type I or man Type II is in a dilemma. Her husband's "greatness" is proven, among other things, by his having several wives but at the same time, these other wives threaten her autonomy within the household.

Korra's wife, Amsa, has found her own solution. She has developed her trade and thus her economic independence. In addition to the prestige obtained through her marriage to an office who is a 'woman hunter', she has independently strengthened her feminine prestige through trade. She lives in a separate household and her autonomy and prestige is not threatened in the same way as her fellow-wives' when Korra takes a fourth wife. Amsa is one of the women in Mainé who has the highest prestige. This is manifested, among other things, in her role as the generous mother of the bride (case I).

5.9. Modern women: school girls, teachers, nurses

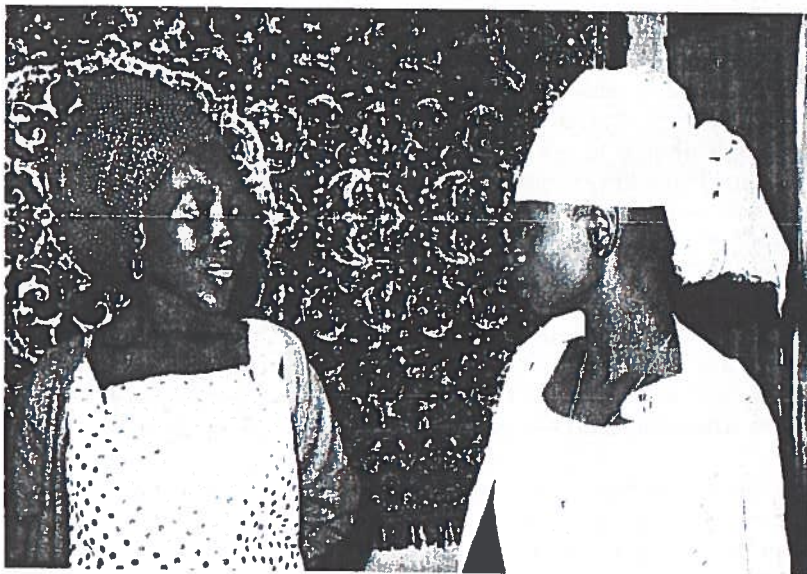
School girls:

The primary school in Maïné goes through the sixth school year. Up to four years ago, the classes were mixed both girls and boys. The four lower classes are now divided between a boy and a girl school. In the two classes where the students are mixed, the girls sit on one side of the classroom and the boys on the other. The schoolteacher, Melle (case V) says concerning the girls in his fifth class that they do not answer, say nothing during classes but that they are cleverer than the boys in the written work are. If Melle, during the class hours, asks a girl about anything, he never gets more than a single syllable reply. Often the girls involuntarily raise their hand to the mouth when he talks to them and they look down at the desk. It happens, and not so seldom either, that he calls one of the girls, "*ma femme*", my wife, which increases the shyness of the girl.

In the course of the summer, two schoolteachers marry two pupils who have recently finished school. One of them already had a wife. The other is a "bachelor".

School teachers:

Kellu is a teacher for a girl's class. She is Manga and married to the director for the boys school. Kellu does not have a teacher's education, just primary school education. Her fellow wife – who has never gone to school – takes care of both Kellu's and her own children while Kellu teaches.



Modern women in Maïné. They speak several African languages and French.
(Photo L.H.)

The school director for the Maïné *arrondissement* is Djerma and his wife, Marima, is Fulani. She has, like her husband, a teacher's training and she is the new directress for the girl's school. Marima says that she does not want her husband to have contact with other women – much less marry others. She does not want to have more than the three children she already has. She is one of the two women in Maïné who uses the Pill. She says that she has all too much to do with the three she has – now that she no longer lives close to her mother and grandmother who used to take care of her children.

Mai is also a female teacher in the girl's school. She is 21 and still unmarried. She has only recently finished her education in Zinder.

Nurse:

Levva is a 21-year-old nurse who is employed at the dispensary in Diffa. She has been engaged or some time to a veterinary nurse at the agriculture centre in Maïné. They met when they were studying in Niamey. Neither of them is originally from the Maïné area. Late in the summer, they get married: officials and older students of the agriculture centre take her to Maïné in the centre's truck. The wedding is celebrated with a party at the agriculture centre where the officials gather at tables. The bridesmaids (from the secondary school), all dressed in rose-coloured dresses, serve soft drinks and beer. They dance modern dances on the terrace to music from the gramophone.

Levva now gets a job at the hospital in Maïné. After a couple of months it becomes quite evident that Levva expects a child and that she was already pregnant at the time she got married.

Comments: From the school situation, it is shown that the ideal for the virtuous, marriageable girl determines the girl's behaviour *vis-à-vis* the teacher in the school. The schoolgirls are potential homemakers for the schoolteacher; the teacher seeks the traditional masculine prestige through the "initial marriage" to a very young girl. From the age of 10, the schoolgirls are first and foremost potential wives. This influences the teaching situation and the majority of the girls do become married soon after they finish school. Only a few of them go on to secondary school to receive education that is more extensive. The women who have no education above primary level and who are married can have a fellow-wife, while educated women (*i.e.* Marima) demand that their marriage remains monogamous. These educated women do **not** seek to prove the traditional femininity by having many children, "virgin marriage" (*levva*) *etc.* They have a much higher marriage age than that which is traditional and they seek to prove a new type of femininity (type C), which resembles that which we know in Europe. Higher education has had great consequences for the lives of these women.

6. Women's opportunities in Mangaland

6.1. Role switching

We shall look a little more closely at how and why the women in Maïné and Garawa swing between A (married woman) and B (*karuwa*). We are interested in the transformation from A to B and from B to A. We have through case histories tried to show how women in various stages of life and in various social strata and situations seek to reach the optimum of feminine prestige by changing their status.

Fero klayasko:

As "three-head", the most important resources of the girl are: virginity²⁶, the status of her family, beauty, and affluence. Her guardian, *luwali*, chooses her husband so that at the right time she may achieve ideal femininity, which is important for the prestige of the family. The emancipation of a girl from her *luwali* can only happen through an ideal, initial marriage – if he is not to lose male prestige and if she is to be able to maintain ideal femininity for the rest of her life. This is especially the case for the Manga girl. For Hausa and Fulani, however, virginity is not quite so important. Furthermore, the Manga consider it essential for a girl or a woman to have breasts before she can make love.²⁷

The school in Mainé has brought about a change in the resources of the girl: She has new language abilities, etc. and going to school has caused her to be older than it has caused girls in, e.g. Garawa, when she enters her *larisa*. The higher age poses a threat to the important resource, virginity, before the marriage. These factors mean, among other things, that we find in Mainé initial marriages that have not been contracted between close relatives, since marriage with an official "compensates" for lack of blood bond and the ethnic connection (i.e. inter-ethnic wedding, case I). The fact that most men, also the educated ones, still consider *larisa* a condition to achieve masculine prestige, contributes to the guardian, pressing the ward into ideal *larisa*.

Kamu:

The married woman is subject to her husband's authority and has to fill a more demanding role than the unmarried girl. She must be virtuous, willing to serve him, and must not play games. Some women are only married once (40 % of the women in Garawa Yallah). Marriage brings about reduced freedom for many women, however. Various circumstances can cause a woman to find her marital situation unsatisfactory. It is possible that she may not like her husband, or she may be dissatisfied with the co-wife or co-wives. (At any given time, only 15 % of the marriages in Garawa Yallah are polygamous, 85 % are monogamous; the figures for Mainé are 19 % and 81 % respectively). The birth of many children, especially boys, may have a stabilising effect on the marriage (cf. case VIII, Tables 5, 6). But if the women are still not given an adequate amount of presents or attention, and if the husband is not showing her family proper respect, she will leave him. The young woman, married for the first time, often becomes conscious of rank only after a couple of years of marriage. She feels that she has resources such as beauty, the art of conversation, etc. that may help her to find a husband on her own who may satisfy her demands to a greater extent. The case may also be that the husband is dissatisfied with her. Perhaps she is not bearing him children or is not doing her housework satisfactorily, or other things. She is not able to meet the minimum demands of the role of wife. She may have so little female prestige to lose that she leaves the marriage (the woman seems more often to break away than the man does), in order to obtain freedom outside the marriage. The status as *karuwa* represents an actual alternative for her in this situation. It seems that children in the marriage do not necessarily keep it together (cf. case VII). Still, children are often given away. We can suggest hypothetically that a connection exists between the enormous "flow of women" and enormous "flow of children" in this society. This, however, demands new research in the field to clarify.

²⁶ A Manga girl must not be *fero sukkado*, 'perforated girl', and it is *nəngua*, shame, if she becomes pregnant without being married.

²⁷ The Manga have the following stereotype about the Fulani:
"The Fulani are much too eager for sex. They have many *karuwai* and the girls start prostituting themselves already from the age of 9, even before they have breasts!" (i.e. too early)

The divorce rate is high, and being divorced does not carry any stigma. Many other women live as *karuwa*. This status does not exclude a woman in any way from a later marriage, which she knows is essential in the end in order to be completely accepted socially. Now she has one important resource, which is necessary to become a *karuwa*: she has been through an initial marriage!²⁸ As we have seen (cf. case V), a *karuwa* can to a higher degree than a married woman show off her resources and if she is a highly sought after *karuwa*, this will increase her chances to contract a more prestigious marriage.

Karuwa:

The duration of a *karuwa* period may vary between some weeks and several years. The amount of external beauty and her ability to act the role as *karuwa* determines whether a woman is going to be successful as a *karuwa*. The extent of demand, which she is able to work up, is important to her rank as *karuwa*. She must alter her behaviour; she must be open, cheeky, entertaining in her conversation, and well dressed to attract the men. A *karuwa* may come to the bar in Mainé, flirt with men, and hold their hands. A Manga *karuwa* will change from the long dress with long sleeves worn by a *kamu* to a short-sleeved blouse and skirt, or a dress with tight-fitting bodice – and she may change from the hairstyle of the married woman to the "page-boy" style. In Garawa, many Manga women do not wear a scarf, but in Mainé they do. A newly started *karuwa* wears her scarf a little longer over the front of the head than before, even down the forehead. Even strangers in the villages read these many idioms, they are clear signs. Some *karuwai* in Mainé play *ludo* more than they sweep the yard. Other *karuwai* smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol, especially at parties. Only *karuwai* dance in couples on such occasions. In Garawa, the *karuwai* neither drink nor smoke. On the other hand, *karuwai* are in the forefront of the stage in Garawa whenever there is dancing and singing, for instance at weddings. At all four weddings that Bovin attended in Garawa, a *karuwa* sat closest to the bride. After the wedding, however, there is no contact between the *karuwa* and the young married wife. A *karuwa* may not have contact with honourable, married women and children nor does she take part in their life behind enclosures. If she has children, their status is more uncertain than that of children of married women (cf. case III). She cannot be certain that the man will assume fatherhood (cf. case VIII). The change of roles from married woman to *karuwa* is easier for women coming from the bush. They have left their kin and affines (case 4 and III). It may be difficult for a married woman to establish herself in the same town as a *karuwa* but not necessarily in all cases (cf. case VII). Having children is no hindrance to a woman's becoming a *karuwa*. She seems to be able to choose between

1. leaving the children with her ex-husband, the father (case VII) or
2. taking her small children with her in her position as *karuwa* (case IV) or
3. giving the children away to the grandparents or other relatives (case III).

She does not have virginity and may not marry a man who has not been initially married. The children of the *karuwa* may have different legal fathers (cf. case IV, Zubdu's "three kinds of children"). But when a *karuwa* gives birth to a child and knows who the father is, it may cause the father to marry her because children are a sign of wealth and potency (case VIII). Thus, we

²⁸

Cf. M. Smith, 1954:25/26:

To be an adult, it is therefore necessary to have been married. Consequently by definition, all Hausa prostitutes have been previously married as the Hausa distinguish between *tsarance* (pre-marital love-making) and *karuwanci* (prostitution) according to the status of the female concerned, both relationships being identical in their economic and sexual aspects.

see that the status of the man (*i.e.* married or unmarried) is decisive for his relationship to a *karuwa* and for the possibility of his marrying her.

The more attractive a *karuwa* is, the richer the man or men she may connect with and from whom she can obtain money or presents through prostitution. We shall define prostitution as:

The sexual relationship between a man and a woman, entered into voluntarily and giving the woman the privilege of receiving money or gifts from the man. The partners have no future rights to one another.

In this definition, we have not touched upon the question of shame or no shame or of acceptance and non-acceptance of the woman or the man in this connection. According to this definition, there is prostitution in Niger as well as in Denmark *etc.* (*cf.* below).

The woman who is most in demand and who has a permanent contact with one of the highest ranking men (*kam kurra*, big man) in town has the highest rank as a *karuwa* (*cf.* case IV). The woman who is not very attractive and who must have relationships with many, often poor, men to make a living, has the lowest rank (*cf.* case III). Some *karuwai* do various types of trading business parallel to prostitution.²⁹ Their income from trading can protect *karuwai* against having to take up poor relationships; in other words can partly compensate for lack of attractiveness. The older a *karuwa* becomes and the less attractive she is, the more she must depend on trading unless she gets married.

A rich *kamu* may invest in a *hajj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca. A rich *karuwa*, on the other hand, is more apt to invest in "hajj" to a big city in Niger (Zinder or Niamey) instead. A married woman will go to Mecca with a brother, husband, or son. A *karuwa*, however, will go to Niamey with a lover (case 5).

In the long run, though, freedom and prestige of a *karuwa* does not adequately compensate for lack of ideal femininity. In order to achieve the prestige obtainable only by a married woman, a *karuwa* may remarry if she receives an acceptable offer of marriage from a man with whom she may have an emotionally based relationship and who promises an improved status.³⁰ This time she herself takes part in the decision process. The change of roles may, however, involve some difficulty. She may no longer play several suitors off against one another (Kurrati, case 7), to gain advantages such as money and presents. She now receives presents and money only from one man: her husband who was formerly one of her suitors. Now he has privileges and duties towards her and vice versa. He alone shall provide her with dresses *etc.* and he can decide when she is to go visiting, fetch water from the well, and he can demand food, water, and other things served in the way previously described. It is her right to have him provide her with millet and meat, so that she may cook. She may now have to subject herself to the authority of a *kam kurra*, her world is to be separated from other men's, and she shall now spend the day with other married women and children. As a married woman, she is not visited

²⁹ *I.e.* the situation here is different from that among Hausa in Hill, 1969, where prostitutes cannot participate in trade like secluded, married women can. According to A. Cohen, 1969:64, 217, Hausa prostitutes are petty traders.

³⁰ Our findings from Eastern Niger and thus much the same as S. Bernus' findings from Western Niger, from the capital Niamey. S. Bernus, 1969:161:
Il est clair que les femmes sont très conscientes des avantages et des inconvénients de leur situation: indépendance économique, libération de bien des travaux ménagers fastidieux compensent pourtant pas toujours la sécurité que procure la situation de femme mariée. Et celles qui n'ont pas beaucoup de succès ont une vie souvent difficile, et cherchent à se remarier, même si cette nouvelle union doit être temporaire.

by *karuwai*, only by other married women, children, and male relatives. She no longer appears as a *karuwa*, does not dance in order to entertain men in the evening. It is a fact that married women sometimes show ritual dances at weddings *etc.* (case 1 and 8), wriggling their posteriors and playing "the jolly kitchen" with pots and pans. This, however, is accepted and controlled abandon. It is theatre which will end as soon as the work by the mortar and the handmill starts gain next morning. Fertility, humility, and industriousness are important qualities for the married woman. If she does not have them or want to have them, it reflects on the dignity of the husband, conflicts arise, and she leaves the marriage (case VIII). On the other hand, the prestige of the man (generosity, affluence, *etc.*) is a deciding factor in whether the woman fills the demands as a married woman or not (case II). More than one half of the women swing between female status A and B.

In addition, there will – in the same woman – be a conflict or contradiction between nice (married woman) and free (*karuwa*). Aisha (case 3) is a pretty, secluded, married woman but latent in the air is the feeling that she might feel like running away. Many informants also claim that married Manga women often can be unfaithful – but only when the husband is far off on a long business journey for instance. On the other hand, a *karuwa* is not available for just anybody, she is selective in her choice of men and may even, for long periods, remain with only one man (case IV).

The woman in Eastern Niger who has school education still gets married early (12 years old, at most at the age of 16 years), and only later does she have the possibility of running off from her husband. Her Arabic sister (in Egypt, Iraq *etc.*) does not have the same possibilities of oscillating between status A and status B. with such ease. Divorce is much more serious and seldom in Arabic countries, and the educated Arab girl will therefore try to postpone her initial marriage as long as she can. Often until she is over 30 years old because "I am going to get as much out of the time before marriage as possible, because once I get married, I shall be secluded for ever."³¹ The developmental marriage cycle is highly different from one Islamic country to another.

When the woman in Niger, after her "initial wedding", is initiated to the grown-up stage, only two possibilities are open to her – until the stage of *kumurjo* – and that is *kamu* or *karuwa*. As a married woman, she is under the authority of her husband; as *karuwa* she is under her *magajiya*'s authority (B-1) or under her father's or another relative's or *luwali*'s authority (B-2). B-2 is the case if she moves to her father or parents or other relative rather than to stay with other *karuwai*. We find that A and B are the only possibilities for her since a third status, C, is impossible in this society. It is non-existent. A girl or woman is never "her own". C stands for unmarried teacher or other "modern", educated or independent businesswoman who lives on her own and manages alone in society in general. Status C simply does not exist in Eastern Niger, except for the *magajiya* (but there can only be one *magajiya* for each town, that is an office). C is neither there in praxis nor in theory and there is no word for C. An ordinary woman who tries status C is put under the category of B (*cf.* case IX). She is *karuwa*, nothing but a *karuwa*.

Evans-Pritchard also writes (1965:45) that among primitive peoples

there are no unmarried adult women [...] Women among ourselves can choose to marry or not to marry, and if they choose not to marry they can devote their lives to teaching, research, administration, charity, or whatever it may be; or

³¹ We are grateful to Karen Li Simpkins for this comment from Beirut.

they combine married life with a profession or job and with all sorts of interests outside the home. The primitive woman has no choice [...]

For this female role, C, we do not see any real possibilities in the case of the woman in Eastern Niger, at least not by internal forces. A revolution from outside is the only way to a creation of a C-status. Until then, the woman remains in the pattern of oscillating between A and B. If we were to explain the minus of status C in the area of authority, one possible explanation could be the following: Woman's sex and fertility necessarily have to be guarded and controlled by a fixed authority in this culture. The woman's sex and fertility are valuable potentials which one can create alliances (Lévi-Strauss) and Islam prescribes the sanction that it is a man (or *magajiya*) who allocates a woman's resources – not herself.

Kumurjo:

When the woman grows older, her attractiveness and her fertility are reduced. Her new resource is old age, which gains respect for her. Status as *karuwa* no longer represents a real alternative for her and her status gradually becomes more stable, either as a married or an unmarried *kumurjo*. The unmarried (divorced, widowed) *kumurjo* is the only one among all women who, in addition to complete freedom, can maintain complete feminine prestige.

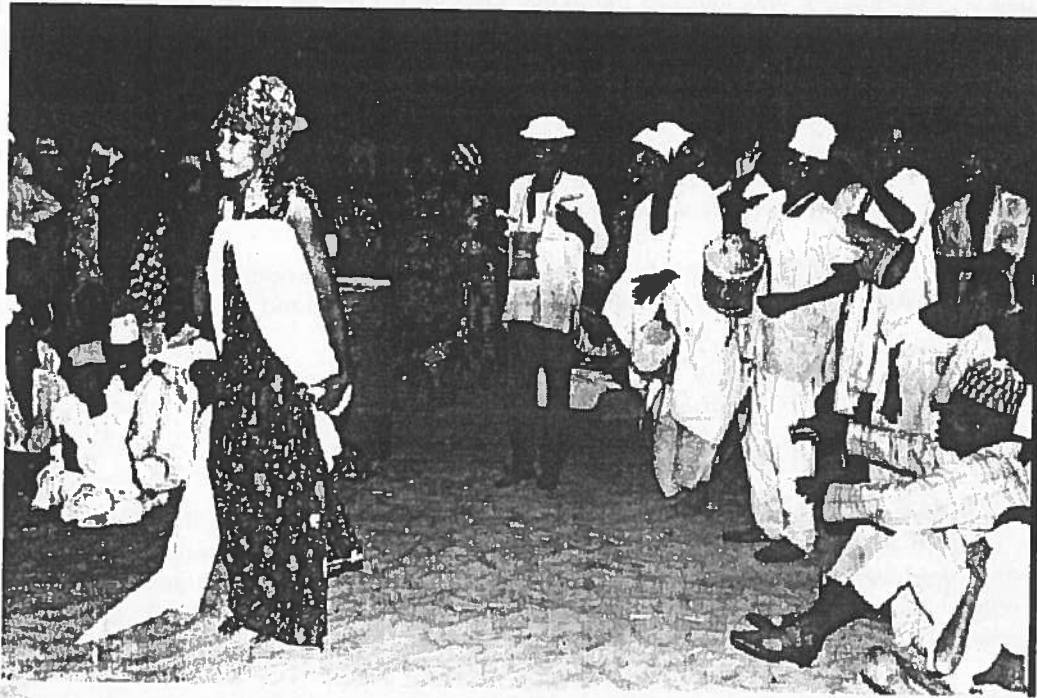
Magajiya:

The *magajiya* is a unique member in this society. As mentioned above, there can only be one (or two) in each town or village, as it is an elected office. In order to become a *magajiya*, she must have been *fero klayasko*, *kamu*, and finally *karuwa*. These stages are also shown symbolically in the dance (photo). Her election is based on her abilities as a *karuwa* (sex plus intelligence), her leadership qualities, her family background (in olden times the sister of a chief), and her ethnic affiliation as well as her affluence (business abilities). A *magajiya* actually achieves the same freedom and respect as a *kumurjo*, an old woman; only for a *magajiya* this is possible at an earlier stage. It is possible to become a *magajiya* around the age of 30 (case 5).

6.2. Comparison between the villages Garawa and Maïné

Comparing Maïné and Garawa, which is 20 km to the north, certain obvious differences are apparent:

1. We find, for instance, many more *karuwai* in Maïné (about 200 *karuwai* in a town of 2000 inhabitants) than in Garawa (4 – 5 *karuwai* in a village of about 400 inhabitants). The difference is not due to marriage in Maïné being less stable than in Garawa. Maïné is more complex than Garawa, has a larger market, larger male clientele, higher exchange of money and therefore more possibilities for contact with males. Also, recruiting of *karuwai* to Maïné is taking place from Garawa and other villages in the bush surrounding Maïné. From the male clientele's point of view, we may hint at some demographic factors, such as male labour from outside being one decisive factor in the greater number of *karuwai* in Maïné than in Garawa. About 200 foreign workers live in Maïné at any moment (and these men are either bachelors or have left their wives at home, far away). These are, among others, Dagara men who are professional water carriers, while between one and five Dagara water carriers live in Garawa at any given time. The number of *karuwai* and foreign workers seems to be about equal in both



An 'independent' woman: she dances in the street in the evening and is admired by men – and there are many. (Photo L.H.)

villages! The Dagara come without wives and they stay for one month or several years. They visit *karuwai* locally in Eastern Niger. This demographic explanation is, however, only hypothetical and needs further research.

2. In Maïné we see examples of *kamu kulle*, woman in *pardah* (case I and II). In Garawa all women go to the fields and to the well for water. There are more rich men in Maïné than in Garawa who can afford to have wives in *pardah*.

3. The extent of polygyny is greater in Maïné than in Garawa. In Garawa Yallah 85 % of all marriages at a given time are monogamous while 15 % are bigamous and nobody has more than two wives. In Garawa Anum three men have three wives but none has four. In Maïné there are several men with three or four wives but the most common form of marriage is also here monogamous, this constitutes 81 % of all marriages.

4. At the present time the new educational system has meant increased possibilities for men. The economically secure position of an official makes him eligible (in Maïné) as a suitable husband for a girl who shall be married for the first time, although he may meet the demands of neither ethnic nor family background (case I). Thus one may say that these new choices in the contracting of *larisa* in Maïné have brought about a change in the traditional form of *larisa*. As the circumstances surrounding the contracting of marriage have not been changed in the same

way in Garawa, we find that the traditional criteria at entering *larisa* still hold here. (Even so, inter-ethnic marriages do take place in Garawa also, cf. case 1, but in this case the families are neighbours.)

5. The first examples of men and women renouncing the importance of fertility for femininity and masculinity we find in Mainé (case IX). This must be seen, among other things, in view of the fact that the fixed income of an official makes him independent of children as a necessary labour force. This is not so in Garawa.

6. It is also in Mainé that we find the first woman who through her education has achieved independence to the extent that the man accepts her demand for a monogamous marriage (case IX).

7. Village- and city prostitution in West Africa

The institution for independent women which we have described from the villages in Mangaland in Eastern Niger is totally different from what one might call "professional prostitution". The village *karuwai* are in no way involved in criminal activities. They sell sex for money but most *karuwai* marry at one time or another: only very few are "professional" *karuwai* who have chosen the activity as a "job".

Some village *karuwai* go to the cities to look for greener pastures and may even cross frontiers between countries. There are, for instance, six different categories of prostitutes in the City of Abidjan. One of these six categories is constituted by *karuwai* from Niger Republic (mostly Hausa and Djerma). They keep together in a group guided by a *magajiya* (cf. J. Touch and E. Bernus, 1957). On the other hand there are some city prostitutes who go to the countryside, temporarily, to earn money there, where the competition is not as tough as in the cities.

In the West African cities we find both the type of *karuwai* which we have described from the villages of Mangaland and the tough, professional type. As concerns prostitution in Nigeria's Lagos, we refer the reader to the Nigerian author Cyprian Ekwensi's novel *Jagua Nana*. It treats one of the more "sophisticated" prostitutes in Lagos who is called Jaguar because she looks like the Jaguar car.

The newspapers in Niger Republic and Nigeria every now and again publish long, moralising articles about prostitution and that it should be eliminated. Here is an example from *Albishir* newspaper, Maiduguri. The article is called "Prostitution: Foothold in Maiduguri" and deals with the many "strange night habits", "sisters", "*karuwai*" who have "invaded our hotels, night-clubs, and pubs to the astonishment of everybody".

Several types are mentioned; those for whom "business is business", "The group that comes in twos and threes for 'short service' employment". It is "the hit-and-run-type", the professional. And then there is the new semi-professional; there is the "smart secretary" and the "apparently innocent highschool girl who turns to drinking". Finally there are the "small" prostitutes. The article ends with a warning against the phenomenon in general because it is "bad for the society" because "prostitution goes hand-in-hand with criminality. Brothels are closely related to robbers, thieves, and gangsters. Prostitution might therefore indirectly lead to criminality in our country." Another effect of prostitution is the "sexually transmitted illnesses". It also leads to psychological damage for the women who get a very "negative perspective on life". The reasons

why a woman prostitutes herself, says the article, are "divorce families, moral weakness and a general tendency to promiscuity." "It is the era of decadence."

In reality prostitution is not new in Africa; it is not certain either that there are more prostitutes now than in former times. But there is no doubt that it has been commercialised by colonialism and that the girls have progressively got a lower social status than before. The role that the professionals play in the city must be said to be fundamentally different from *karuwai* in Mainé and Garawa which we compared to the role of a *geisha*.

The *Albishir* article must be understood on the background of the fact that there is an almost 100 % Muslim readership in Borno – and in Africa one is used to see journalists behave like moralists.

8. Comparison: prostitution in Denmark and the *karuwai* institution

In Denmark the use of the words "prostitution, brothel, whore" signifies those extra-marital sexual relationships which are openly commercial, cf. our definition of prostitution above. In Denmark the ideal for women supports monogamous marriage as an institution. Prostitution is socially stigmatised in Denmark. Though the various social classes consider in different ways those who prostitute themselves. Moreover, there are various categories of prostitutes in Denmark: prostitutes of the streets, "luxury prostitutes", and "call girls". They are ranked (like *karuwai* in Niger). Covertly commercial sexual relations between men and women outside marriage are not institutionalised in Denmark. Most people regard prostitution to be shameful and stigmatising. The woman who prostitutes herself cannot possess "ideal femininity"; she is a social deviant in Denmark.

The Danish law only mentions prostitution in a subordinate clause, under the heading "immorality". The Danish government mainly leads a "Victorian ostrich politics"³²: behaving as if the problem just did not exist and thereby hoping that it might one day disappear. The Danish Penal Code, Section 199 reads:

Subsection 1. If somebody gives oneself up to idleness under such conditions that there is a possibility of assuming that he does not try to support himself in a lawful way, he will be told by the police to seek lawful employment within a certain time and possibly there should be found work for him. In case the order is not obeyed, the person concerned is punished for vagrancy, according to the punishment mentioned in Section 198.

Subsection 2. Lawful employment does not include gambling, immorality, or support from women who support themselves by immorality.

It is, by the way, peculiar that the word "he" is used in the penal code.

Jordahn tries to compare western society with non-western societies in the world:

In the western world the concepts of sin, guilt, and impurity were introduced in connection with sexual activity in order to maintain sexual morality.

The concept "impurity" – and "danger" we could add – also holds true for sex in Niger (case 9), but the concepts of "sin and guilt", we think are products of the Christian culture. They do not in the same way worry people in the Islamic culture (e.g. Niger).

³² called thus by Bodil Jordahn, 1965:7. Thanks to Henny Harald Hansen for critical comments on this chapter.

Jordahn³³ as social worker suggests the following for Denmark:

Legalise prostitution and bring it under control. Protect those who exercise it as well as the clients – we live in a constitutional state. Authorisation to those who exercise the profession, medical inspection and remedy to the curing of the psychological and social problems, is what could be reasonably claimed in a civilised country.

This suggestion is not so very far from the way in which the *karuwa* – *magajiya* institution in fact works in Niger. The girls in Niger have (or had, especially before the French came) authorisation to carry out *karuwanci* and there was remedy to their problems, through the strong female leader *magajiya* and other *karuwai*. Medical inspection is non-existent for both the girls in Niger and the girls in Denmark.

The ideal basis for establishing marriage in Denmark today is "romantic love". There is a tendency to understate the economic aspects in non-marital as well as in marital relationships. One does not say outright that he pays her for her services (or vice versa). Research in Sweden (Israel and Eliasson, 1970) has shown that the demands to maintaining femininity and masculinity respectively are not the same. This showed that a woman runs a greater risk than a man does if she enters into a sexual relationship not based on "romantic love" – she loses some of her femininity. A man may start a sexual relationship with a woman 20 years his junior with no risk of losing masculinity. However, a woman, establishing a relationship with a man much younger than her, risks loss of femininity. These differences in the norm for men and women in society (Swedish as well as Danish) are not found in the formal laws of marriage. They are of a more informal character.

In Mainé and Garawa, the differences between the positions of men and women are clearly spelled out in the Islamic marriage laws: marriage may be polygamous and by definition gives greater authority to the man than to the woman. The man can attain formal authority over several women while at the same time, without any sanctions and without loss of male prestige, he may have relations with *karuwai*. The woman cannot openly have extra-marital sexual relationships without strongly challenging the man's right in her; she will also thereby lose feminine prestige. She has an alternative to marriage; she may become a *karuwa*. The status as a *karuwa* in itself gives less ideal femininity than the status as a married woman does. However, it does give her possibilities for contacts and new marital or sexual relations which can give her higher rank than the marriage she is leaving and this way of life carries in itself no stigma.

The traditional *larisa* in Garawa and Mainé is not based on "romantic love" but on a contract between the families of the young man and the young girl. Thus "romantic love" between marriage partners is not a precondition for the marriage (but is a possible result). A woman does not lose her femininity or a man his masculinity, if he or she enters a sexual relationship not based on "romantic love". It carries no stigma for a *karuwa* to establish a relationship not based on emotions and it does not keep her from getting married.

Among the different types of relationships between a *karuwa* and a man, we find relationships solely based on what we understand by a totally commercial definition of prostitution, but we also find relationships based on emotion. The *karuwa* profession represents an open marriage market where the woman herself may take part in the deciding process connected to the choice of the marriage partner. Thus the *karuwa* institution represents a *temporary and accepted alternative to marriage* but not an alternative to achieving the ultimate, ideal femininity which only marriage can give.

³³ Jordahn, 1965:10

As we have earlier pointed out, *larisa* has a strong element of initiation to a legitimate sexual life for the woman. A woman actually cannot enter the competition for rank without having been in *larisa*. Legitimate sexual life is compulsory for both sex roles. *Larisa* then becomes necessary for the woman if she is to achieve femininity. She cannot become a real *karuwa* if she has not lost her virginity in marriage. Legitimate sexual life is also compulsory for the man because rights in a woman or in women are important in order to display his "ability" in the male role. This is also the only way in which he can obtain rights to children with any certainty.

The *karuwai* lifestyle is not compatible with the marital ties to a man because he has no control over her. Therefore, a woman must choose to be either one or the other. The man, however, can be both married and a "woman hunter" at the same time because the relationship to a *karuwa* (as an occasional relationship) is flattering to a married man's masculinity but he risks losing the right in the potential issue from such a relationship.

In Denmark, prostitution is so stigmatising for a woman that only with difficulty can she swing from B to A, from prostitute to married wife – unlike the woman in Niger. If a woman chooses to prostitute herself in Denmark, this act can be considered irreversible. In contrast to a woman in Niger, a woman in Denmark can prostitute herself without having been married. On the other hand, a woman in Denmark, having once prostituted herself, takes the risk that she will be stigmatised for the rest of her life.

There is also a difference between the position in the social structure which a *karuwa* and a Danish prostitute has. Likewise is there a difference in their conduct and sphere of activities. In Eastern Niger, the *karuwai* appear on the front stage³⁴: They turn out as a corps, they shake the hand of the president and ministers when they arrive. In Denmark, "Nyhavn" girls do not flock to shake the hand of the king or of ministers at official functions. They have no acceptable role on the cultural front stage. Here it is the prominent persons' own wives who fill the representative places.³⁵

9. Conclusion

1. A satisfactory understanding of marriage in Eastern Niger must include analysis of both:
 - A. the marriage institution 1 man – 1 woman
 - B. the *karuwa* institution 1 woman – several men

because each married woman is a potential *karuwa* and each *karuwa* is a potential married woman (given certain conditions, such as age).

³⁴ Cf. E. Goffman, 1959.

³⁵ Although in Denmark (and in other European countries) one finds a category of girls who resemble those *karuwai* who turn out as a corps in Niger when prominent males arrive. Though in

the Danish case they are not famous politicians but famous musicians. It is the so-called "groupis" (in Danish): girls who always appear at the scene after beat concerts; they are sex-partners of famous beat musicians. These girls are looked down upon by non-musicians who do not dare to establish relationships with them. They are for the most unmarried (never married) girls, in contrast to *karuwai* in Niger who have always been married. For the information on "groupis" we thank Palle Rolf Christensen.

2. There is an inequality between the two sexes: the woman can only be either wife or *karuwa*, i.e. in succession while the man can have (several) wives and (several) *karuwai* simultaneously. A man is a true man as either a holy man or a "woman hunter", or a man can be an *Alhaji* and a "woman hunter" at the same time.

3. The stability of marriage and frequency of divorce in this society can be understood when we can establish which alternatives

- A. the marriage institution and
- B. the *karuwa* institution

offer to women who find themselves in the one or other respectively. This must be seen against the background

- (a) which we have explained concerning ideal femininity and ideal masculinity which is part of the local culture,
- (b) what part rank plays, and
- (c) what results relative age has for the marriage stability and frequency of divorce.

4. Status A, married woman, gives the green light for a change to status B, *karuwa*. However, a woman cannot start her marital career as *karuwa*. Therefore, the first marriage is the girl's "initiation", *rite de passage*, to the status of adult woman. After the "initiation", there is reversibility between A and B.

5. Status as *karuwa* represents a non-stigmatised alternative for the married woman in Eastern Niger. A *karuwa* is not stigmatised as a prostitute like in Denmark for example, where swinging is irreversible (or hard). A woman spends the periods between her marriages as *karuwa* and this status is seen so frequently and is so normal that a *karuwa* cannot be marked as being a social deviant as M.G. Smith suggested, or as a prostitute as defined in Europe. A *karuwa* can, as opposed to a married woman, show off abilities which give her resources she can use in making a later marriage. Thus *karuwa* is a step in women's developmental marriage cycles.

6. In both the husband-wife relationship and the man-*karuwa* relationship there is a question of transaction of

- (a) sex and
- (b) money or gifts

and these transactions take place and have their importance in the dimensions of rank. While the husband-wife relationship involves prescribed rights in one another and in common offspring, the man-*karuwa* relationship does not lead to anything of the sort.

7. Ethnic group membership seems to be more important for women, especially for *karuwai*, than for men for whom other social "dimensions" are dominating namely occupation, education, wealth, etc.

8. The *magajiya-karuwa* institution in Eastern Niger has, according to "native" theory, changed over a period of time:

- (a) The institution has developed more and more in the direction of a European brothel by reason of the French influence. This entails an increased commercialisation of the man-*karuwa* relationship, and a more stigmatised attitude to the *karuwa* who establishes a sexual relation without basing it on "romantic love".
- (b) A *magajiya*'s influence was important in earlier times for unmarried virgins, and for divorced women and widows (*zawara*) as well as for *karuwai*: now it is only concerned with *karuwai*. A *magajiya* no longer receives gifts from the young girls as law prohibits this.
- (c) The institution has had increasing political influence and is politically directed. The party now chooses the *magajiya* or approves her election and a *magajiya* with her *karuwai* take now active part in the political arena.

9. New institutions such as schools do not carry with them new expansion possibilities to the same degree for the woman as they do for the man. On the contrary, school education *etc.* seems to temporarily *widen the gap between the two sexes'* chances for new professions and lifestyles in general. This barrier situation is created because

- (a) going to school does not result in an increase in occupational or living opportunities as long as the schoolgirl is taken out of school to become married at the proper age (or gets married shortly after finishing primary school) and is kept more or less in *purdah*;
- (b) educated men prefer uneducated women;
- (c) it is easy for the woman to oscillate between status A and B. If the A situation is unsatisfactory for her; she swings over into B and from B she swings back to A.

Status C, which is the unmarried, emancipated woman in new, modern occupations, does not represent any real alternative for her, perhaps because B is developed as an institution to such an extent.

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TABLE 3: Garawa Yallah - women married once at least, by age and number of marriages
 (Source: Bovin's household study, 1968)

age/years no. of nyia (marriages)	Number of marriages						average no. of marriages per woman (5 yrs age class)	average no. of marriages per woman (10 yrs. age class)	
	1	2	3	4	5	6			
12-14	2					2	2	1.0	teenagers: 1.0 marriages
15-19	3					3	3	1.0	
20-24	3	1	1			11	5	2.2	women in 20s: 1.9 marriages
25-29	2	2				6	4	1.5	
30-34		3	3			15	6	2.5	women in 30s: 1.8 marriages
35-39	1					1	1	1.0	
40-44		2	4	1	1	31	9	3.4	women in 40s: 3.2 marriages
45-49				1		3	1	3.0	
50-54	2					2	2	1.0	women in 50s: 1.0 marriages
55-59						0	0		
60-64	1	1				3	2	1.5	women in 60s: 1.3 marriages
65-69	1					1	1	1.0	
70-74					1	3	1	3.0	women in 70s: 3.0 marriages
75-79						0	0		
80-84	1					1	1	1.0	women in 80s: 1.3 marriages
85-89	1	1				3	2	1.5	
TOTAL	17	9	10	1	2	85	40	2.1	2.1

TABLE 4: Garawa Yallah – women's two types of marriages (i.e. Table 3, column 2 broken down)
 (Source: Bovin's household study, 1968)

age/ years	no. of women	number of marriages				average no. n. fadoe/woman	marriage type					total n. karagae	average no. n. karagae/woman
		nyia fadoe		total			nyia karagae		total				
		1	2	3	4		1	2	3	4	5		
12-13	2	1				0.5	1					1	0.5
15-19	3	2				0.7	1					1	0.3
20-24	5	3				0.6	2	1		1		8	1.6
25-29	4	3				0.8	1	1				3	0.8
30-34	6	2	1			0.7	2	3	1			11	1.8
35-39	1					0.0	1					1	1.0
40-44	9	4				0.7	1	3	2	1	2	27	3.0
45-49	1	1				1.0		1				2	2.0
50-54	2					0.0		2				2	1.0
55-59	0					--							--
60-64	2	2				1.0	1					1	0.5
65-69	1					0.0	1					1	1.0
70-74	1	1				1.0			1			2	2.0
75-79	0					--							--
80-84	1	1				1.0							--
85-89	2	1				0.5				2		2	1.0
TOTAL	40	21	1	0	0	0.6	23	15	10	3	2	62	1.6

- This table has been published in Bovin's article "Mariages de la maison" et 'Mariages de la brousse' dans les sociétés Peule, Wodaabe et Kanuri autour du Lac Tchad." in N. Echarad (ed.) *Les Relations Hommes-Femmes dans le bassin du Lac Tchad*. ORSTOM, Paris, 1991. pp. 265 – 323.
- The woman with two *nyia fadoe* has been married to the same man twice, with another marriage in between.

TABLE 5 Garawa Yallah - men (married once at least) by age and number of marriages
 (Source: Bovin's household study, 1968)

age/years no. of <i>nyia</i> (marriages)	Number of marriages							total no. <i>nyia</i>	total no. men	average no. of marriages per man (5 yrs age class)	average no. of marriages per man (10 yrs age class)
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7				
20 - 24	2						2	2	1.0	men in their 20s: 1.0 marriages	
25 - 29	2						2	2	1.0		
30 - 34	4	2		1			14	7	2.0	men in their 30s: 2.2 marriages	
35 - 39	1	1	2				9	4	2.3		
40 - 44	1						2	1	2.0	men in their 40s: 3.2 marriages	
45 - 49		2	1		1		17	4	4.3		
50 - 54	2	1		6			14	4	3.5	men in their 50s: 2.3 marriages	
55 - 59	1						1	1	1.0		
60 - 69							0	0	0	men in their 60s: 0	
70 - 74	1		1				6	2	3.0	men in their 70s: 3.0 marriages	
75 - 79							0	0	0		
80 - 84							0	0	0	men in their 80s: 3.0 marriages	
85 - 89	1						3	1	3.0		
TOTAL	11	6	2	1	2	1	70	28	2.5	2.5	

TABLE 6: Garawa Yalah – men's two types of marriages (i.e. Table 5, column 2 broken down)
 (Source: Bovin's household study, 1968)

age/ years	no. of men	marriage type nyia fadoe				total nyia fadoe	number of marriages average no. n. fadoe/man						total karagae	average no. n. karagae/man			
		1	2	3	4		1	2	3	4	5	6					
20-24	2	2				2									0		
25-29	2	1				1									1	0.5	
30-34	7	2				2									5	1.7	
35-39	4	2	1			4									2	1.3	
40-44	1					0									1	2.0	
45-49	4	2	1			4									1	3.3	
50-54	4	1				1									1	3.3	
55-59	1					0									1	1.0	
60-64	0															0	
65-69	0															0	
70-74	2	1				1									1	2.5	
75-79	0															0	
80-84	0															0	
85-89	1					0									1	3.0	
TOTAL	28	11	2	0	0	15									10	55	2.0

This table has been published in Bovin's article "Mariages de la maison' et 'Mariages de la brousse' dans les sociétés Peule, Wodaabe et Kanuri autour du Lac Tchad." in N. Echard (ed.) *Les Relations Hommes-Femmes dans le bassin du Lac Tchad*. ORSTOM, Paris, 1991. pp. 265 – 323.

TABLE 7: Garawa Yallah – number of marriages and biological children – women
(Source: Bovin's household study, 1968)

no. of marriages	number of children											no. of women
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	12	
1	3	6		3	1		2	1		1		17
2	4	1	1	1	2							9
3	4	2	1	1	1							10
4	1											1
5	2											2
6					1							1
TOTAL	14	9	2	5	4	2	2	1	0	1		40

TABLE 8: Garawa Yallah – number of marriages and biological children – men
(Source: Bovin's household study, 1968)

no. of marriages	number of children											no. of men
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
1	3	4		1		1	1			1		11
2	1		2		1	1		1				6
3	3	1		1								5
4				1		1						2
5	1											1
6			2									2
7			1									1
TOTAL	7	9	2	3	1	3	1	1	0	1		28