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Form and meaning in Fulfulde: a morphophonological study of Maasinankoore

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Citation

Breedveld, J. O. (1995, May 30). *Form and meaning in Fulfulde: a morphophonological study of Maasinankoore*. CNWS/LDS Publications. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/68663>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Title: Form and meaning in Fulfulde: a morphophonological study of Maasinankoore

Issue Date: 1995-05-30



FORM AND MEANING IN FULFULDE describes the sound structure and word formation processes of Fulfulde based on the data of the Maasina dialect (Mali) with comparative data from other dialects including Ringimaaji (Cameroon). Both Maasinankooore and Ringimaajiire — the dialects on which the author's fieldwork was based — are not commonly studied varieties of Fulfulde. In the first part of the book the author sheds new light on some characteristic features of Fulfulde phonology such as word stress, consonant alternation, and vowel length and its interaction with syllable structure and stress.

In the second part, the author reviews the structure of verbs and their extensions, and presents new and innovative analyses of the nominal class marker system (the suffix grades and the noun classes) of Fulfulde. She argues that the behaviour of the different variants of each class marker is constrained by semantic principles rather than by the lexical nature, phonotactic or syllable structure of the stem as other linguists have traditionally argued. The author also looks in detail at the semantics of the individual 22 classes in Maasina and explores the principles and cultural foundations of the semantic associations among the members of each class. For instance, the author explains how one can account for the treatment of cows, fire and sun as members of the same class in terms of prototype semantics and from cultural ideas about these entities and their relationships recoverable in part from Fulbe mythology.

ISBN 90-73782-39-2

ISBN 90-73782-40-6 (thesis edition)