



## Full Length Research Article

### THEMATIC ANALYSIS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CYPRIAN EKWENSI'S NOVEL "THE BURNING GRASS"

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#### ARTICLE INFO

##### Article History:

Received 14<sup>th</sup> August, 2016  
Received in revised form  
28<sup>th</sup> September, 2016  
Accepted 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2016  
Published online 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2016

##### Key Words:

Thematic analysis,  
Fulani community,  
Challenges, Culture,  
Religion.

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#### ABSTRACT

This article titled a Thematic analysis and significance of the Cyprian Ekwensi's novel "*The Burning Grass*" focuses on the Fulani nomadic life. It highlights their real life scenario, showing their struggles, rivalries, conflicts, challenges, culture, religion, and their occupation. It also highlights the factors that affects or supports their day to day activities as well as factors that cause the downfall or the coming apart of a family in the Fulani community of Dokan Toro in the novel. It is however discovered that several cultural practices exist as unifying factors that brought people together under a single roof. It also highlights how generally love separates people as well as it holds a family a house or a society together. The article revolves around three major axes, the general introduction, presentation of the author and his novel, the thematic analysis of the novel and well as the conclusion and bibliography.

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#### INTRODUCTION

This article titled a Thematic analysis and significance of the Cyprian Ekwensi's novel "*The Burning Grass*" focuses on the Fulani nomadic life. It highlights their real life scenario, showing their struggles, rivalries, conflicts, challenges, culture, religion, and their occupation. It also highlights the factors that affects or supports their day to day activities as well as factors that cause the downfall or the coming apart of a family in the Fulani community of Dokan Toro in the novel. It is however discovered that several cultural practices exist as unifying factors that brought people together under a single roof. It also highlights how generally love separates people as well as it holds a family a house or a society together. The article revolves around three major axes, the general introduction, presentation of the author and his novel, thematic analysis of the novel and well as the conclusion and bibliography. Northern Nigeria is still very much dominated by the Fulani nomad who constantly move from the north to the southern part of the country.

The only goal of the Fulani nomad is to lead their herds of cattle to a grazing land to feed them and move with them when their are no more grasses to graze on in the north. Thus, transhumance is a continuous habit of moving with cattles by Fulani people from the north to the south or anywhere they could find a place for their cattle to graze on. However, Cyprian Ekwensi's *Burning Grass* is domination of the culture, customs and general way of living of the Fulani nomad. The novel shows the struggles and rivalry they face especially when it is about quest for power. Love plays a vital role in Fulani community because it allows a Fulani man to participate actively in the game of *Sharro* before he could be given a wife. Cyprian Ekwensi grew up in the northern part of Nigeria and as a result of his contact with the Fulani, he was able to appreciate their culture which he portrays through his first novel titled *The Burning Grass*. *The Burning Grass* is one of his best novel among many others, it was published in 1962 in the African writer's Series Collection. In the novel, Ekwensi carefully portrays the life of the nomadic Fulani highlighting how the nomadic Fulani man or woman attains through courage, hard work and struggles how he attained his goal through determination. Paring, subordination and the under representation of the Fulani nomad is not a recent phenomenon in Africa at large as people tend to look upon them with less interest and disdain thereby under mining their personality.

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However, the case of Fulani nomad in Nigeria particularly those of northern part of the country is worth, most especially now that they are considered as being part of the terrorist or members of the *Boko Haram* thereby creating conflicts and clashes between them and farmers. It is worthy of note at this juncture that it is a misconception, however, one cannot object to the fact that notorious people are not only in the Fulani society but in all the communities in Nigeria. This article aims at clarifying the wrong notion about the position of the Fulani nomad in the Nigerian society. That is why the article emphasizes in highlighting their cultural values, norms and traditions and how their culture made them to be what they are in their peculiar way. *Sharro* for example it is a rite or ceremony in the Fulani society where two rivals will test their manly hood so as to know who is strong enough to win a hand of a bride. It is a game of pride among the Fulani people, that is why Ekwensi while portraying the above culture in the novel sums up as follows

It was the *sharro*, the test of young manhood a Fulani youth who had not taken flogging at the *sharro* would never find a maiden to marry him<sup>65</sup>. This situation from the novel portrays the strength importance of their culture showing the need to know on who is ready and strong enough or courageous to take a wife he loves and who is not. So as to separate men from boys. In respect of the game and how it is played, the author comments as follows:

As ice he stood with feet astride hand interlaced above his head motionless he did not even budge one inch when his opponent began to circle round him with long whip. The leather-hide or *koboko* looking for a tender spot on which to cut him. There was plenty of exposed skin above the waist but from the waist down the challenger was heavily girded in leader cloth<sup>66</sup>

This quotation also portrayed the greatness, strong heartedness and value of the Fulani youth and their women, how well built they stand, how full of courage they are and how ready they appear for the test of their manhood through the game of *Sharro*. However, due to the dangerous nature of the game, only the fittest and strongest man survives and participate actively to the end of the game thereby becoming victorious and consequently winning a love of his fiancée to become his wife.

Cyprian Ekwensi tries to picture the uniqueness and attracting culture of the Fulani's and their tradition by showcasing and exploring their total way of life through life and struggles in his novel. The purpose of this article is therefore to provide an insightful analysis of some of the major themes in the novel, as well as give the in depth meaning and significance of the novel.

### **Historical background of Fulani in northern Nigeria: an overview**

Fulani people are predominantly living in the northern part of Nigeria where they practiced agriculture and animal rearing. It is believed to be an alien tribe whose grazing habits used to bring serious problem to the country's agricultural and forestry practice because of the persistent and constant conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and the farmers as a result of their migration from *Putu Jallo* and consequently their settlement in the northern part of Nigeria where they interacted and intermingled with Hausa people a new tribe known as Hausa-

fulani is eventually constituted presently as a result of marriages and social interactions the Hausa-fulani dominates the northern Nigeria. The origin of the Fulani seems to be obscure. Some writers have endeavored to assign them to an Egyptian origin while others trace them to a linguist named Fezzan M. Dalfosse, whose studies in west African languages give special weight to his opinions, holds the view that Fulani may have owed their origin to the downfall of Hyksos, or shepherd kings, who were driven from Egypt about 1639BC. He likens the Fulani to the gypsy language he says "I think I may say that of all African, Asiatic, Oceanian and European language tongue which I have compared with the language of the Fulani, the language of the gypsies is that which appears to possess the greatest point of resemblance". Flora Shaw 'Lady Lugard' (1906) in support of the theory of the descent of the Fulani from the Hyksos, speaks of the great similarity observed by her husband to exist between the Wahuma of eastern Africa and the Fulani of the Western Sudan both were pastoral nomads who, in their endeavor to secure fresh grazing ground, became invaders and conquerors. In Buganda, Bunyoro, Karagwe and other eastern states the Wahuma founded the royal dynasties with their tribesmen, corresponding in position to the cow Fulani tended the cattle of the negroids. The Wahuma who has a great physical likeness to the Fulani are often strikingly handsome and extremely intelligent, that the Wahuma should have descended upon east African from the valley of the Nile is not surprising. Of both races, Fulani and Wahuma alike, it can at least be said that they so far support the theory of a common origin in the Hyksos so as to have maintained through all the history, in the diverse countries in which they are to be found, the ancient position of the shepherd kings. The one point upon which all scientific investigation agreed is that the language of the Fulani is not African and that this people, which have maintained in the Sudan the individuality no less marked and persistent than that maintained by the Jews in Europe was originally wholly foreign to the environment in which we found it. According to IRO (1994) Fulani herdsmen or Fulani pastoralists are nomadic or semi nomadic Fulani herders whose primary occupation is raising livestock. Furthermore he says that The pure Fulani pastoralist engages in random movement of cattle while the semi-nomadic makes transhumance migration and return to their camps or homes.

The Fulani herdsmen are largely located in the Sahel and semi arid parts of West Africa but due to changes in climate patterns many herdsmen have moved further south into the savannah and tropical forest belt of West Africa. The herdsmen are found in countries such as Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Guinea, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire and Cameroon. In Senegal they inhabit northeastern Ferlo and the southeastern part of the country. In many of these countries the Fula often constitute a minority group. In Nigeria, the livestock supplied by the herdsmen provide a bulk of the beef consumption in the country. Looking at the herding system IRO (1994) says that A pastoral Fulani family is the traditional herding unit. Tasks are divided by gender and age among the members of the family. The main work of men is to manage the herd, find grazing sites, build tents and camps and make security tools such as knives, bow and arrows and guns. Women in the unit take on traditional roles such as sourcing food produce in the market, milking cows, weaving and mat making. Some women are also involved in farming such as growing vegetables and raising poultry. Cattle is the dominant

composition of the Fulani herd in countries such as Nigeria and camel is the least liked animal. The livestock is largely female with close to 60% of cattle being female, the male species are usually reduced by selling them. In terms of movement IRO (1994) says the Fulani herdsman's engage in both random and planned transhumance movements. Random movements are usually taken by the pure nomadic Fulani herdsman while planned movements are taken by the semi nomadic pastoralist. A primary reason for the migratory nature of the herdsman is to reach areas with abundant grass and water for the cattle. The herdsman also move to avoid tax collectors, harmful insects and hostile weather and social environment. A major benefit of the movement for the herdsman is to maximize the availability of food resources for the cattle and reduce excessive grazing.

Before moving to new areas, the herdsman send a reconnaissance team to study the area for availability of resources such as grass and water. In terms of income, Chris Caldicott (1996-11-02). "Take me to the river - Travel". The Independent Says The sale of cattle, goat, sheep and dairy products such as milk constitute the primary source of income and livelihood of the herdsman. Their wealth and riches are often measured by the size of the Cattle herd being the most treasured animal they herd. In addition, 5 November 2012 (2012-11-15). "Dewgal (Crossing of the Cattle): a celebration of greener pastures". Lonely Planet Traditionally, the herdsman often loaned a cow (habbanaya) to another until she calves and after weaning the calf, the cow is returned to its owner. These herdsman herds several species of cattle species of cattle, but the zebu cattle is the most common in the West African hinterland because of its drought resistant traits. The dwarf Ndama cattle is commonly herd in the wetter areas of Fouta Djallon and Casamance as result of their resistant to trypanosomiasis and other conditions directly associated with high humidity. Looking at residence Al-Amin Abu-Manga, Fulfulde in the Sudan: process of adaptation to Arabic (1986), p. 7, "The Fulani in the Sudan are known by the loose generic term 'Fellata'" mention that Fulani herdsman build domed houses called "Suudu hudo" or "Bukkaru" made from grasses. During the dry season, it is often supported with compact millet stalk pillars, and by reed mats held together and tied against wood poles, in the wet or rainy season.

Furthermore "The World Factbook". (2013) says The advantage of the "Bukkaru" house is that it is mobile, easy to set up and dismantle as a typical house of nomadic societies. When it is time to relocate, the houses are dismantled and loaded onto a camel, horses, donkeys and sometimes cattle for transport. One can't talk about the Fulani's without talking about their conflict with the surrounding villagers or people. According to Tonah (2002), Historically, Fulani pastoralists have grazed in lands around the arid and Sahel regions of West Africa partly because of the environmental conditions that limit the amount of land for agricultural purposes leading to less intense competition for land between farmers and herders. However, after recurrent droughts in the northern Nigeria and Sahel regions, Fulani pastoralists have gradually moved southwards to the Guinea savanna and the tropical forest areas resulting in competition for grazing routes with farmers. Tonah (2002) further says that "Fulani pastoralists started migrating into Northern Nigeria from the Senegambia region around the thirteenth or fourteenth century". Okello (2012) added that After the Uthman dan Fodio's jihad, the Fulani became integrated into the Hausa culture of Northern Nigeria.

Thereafter, during the dry season when tsetse fly population is reduced, Fulani pastoralists began to drive their cattle into the middle belt zone dominated by non Hausa groups returning to the north at the onset of the rainy season. But while managing the herd and driving cattle, cattle grazing on farmlands sometimes occur leading to destruction of crops and becoming a source of conflict. Nigeria's implementation of the land use act of 1978 allowed the State or Federal Government the right to assign and lease land and also gave indigenes the right to apply and be given a certificate of occupancy to claim ownership of their ancestral lands. Abbass (2014) stated that "This placed the pastoral Fulani in a difficult position because most did not apply for lands of occupancy of their grazing routes and recurring transhumance movement will lead to encroachment of the properties of others. Thus, Nigeria government designed some areas as grazing routes but this has not reduced clashes. Abbass (2014) Stated that From 1996 to 2006 about 121 people lost their lives in Bauchi and Gombe states as a result of conflicts between pastoralists and farmers" The Fulani's have subgroup that is variety of Fulani tribe of these tribes is the wodaabe tribe. As stated in "Wodaabe People". "University of Iowa The Wodaabe (Fula: *Wo aa e*) or Bororo are a small subgroup of the Fulani ethnic group. They are traditionally nomadic cattle-herders and traders in the Sahel, with migrations stretching from southern Niger, through northern Nigeria, northeastern Cameroon, southwestern Chad, and the western region of the Central African Republic. They are known for their beauty (both men and women), elaborate attire and rich cultural ceremonies. The Wodaabe speak the Fula language and don't use a written language.

In the Fula language, *wo a* means "taboo", and *Wo aa e* means "people of the taboo". "Wodaabe" is an Anglicisation of *Wo aa e*. Loftsdóttir, Kristín (2004). When nomads lose cattle: Wodaabe negotiations of ethnicity. African Sociological Review 2004 8(2): 52-76 highlighted that, This is sometimes translated as "those who respect taboos", a reference to the Wodaabe isolation from broader Fulbe culture, and their contention that they retain "older" traditions than their Fulbe neighbors. Carol Beckwith, (1985) An Interview with Carol Beckwith. African Arts, Vol. 18, says In contrast, other Ful be as well as other ethnic groups sometimes refer to the Wodaabe as "Bororo", a sometimes pejorative name. Carol Beckwith. An Interview with Carol Beckwith. African Arts, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Aug., 1985) and Mette Bovin (2001), added that By the 17th century, the Fula people across West Africa were among the first ethnic groups to embrace Islam, were often leaders of those forces which spread Islam, and have been traditionally proud of the urban, literate, and pious life with which this has been related. Both Wodaabe and other Fulbe see in the Wodaabe the echoes of an earlier pastoralist way of life, of which the Wodaabe are proud and of which urban Fulbe are sometimes critical.

In term of migration in Niger's dandy Gerewol festival, *The Times*, 4 July 2004 stated that At the end of the rainy season in September, Wodaabe clans gather in several traditional locations before the beginning of their dry season transhumance migration. The best known of these is In-Gall's Cure Salée salt market and Tuareg seasonal festival. Here the young Wodaabe men, with elaborate make-up, feathers and other adornments, perform the *Yaake*: dances and songs to impress marriageable women. The male beauty ideal of the Wodaabe stresses tallness, white eyes and teeth; the men

will often roll their eyes and show their teeth to emphasize these characteristics. Wodaabe clans then join for the remainder of the week-long Gerewol: a series of barter over marriage and contests where the young men's beauty and skills are judged by young women.

### **Presentation of the author from his professional to his literary careers**

Ekwensi, an Igbo, was born in Minna, Niger State. He is a native of Nkwelle Ezunaka in Oyi Local Government Area, Anambra State, Nigeria. His father was David Anadumaka, a story-teller and elephant hunter. Ekwensi attended Government College in Ibadan, Oyo State, Achimota College in Ghana, and the School of Forestry, Ibadan, after which he worked for two years as a forestry officer. He also studied Pharmacy at Yaba Technical Institute, Lagos School of Pharmacy, and the Chelsea School of Pharmacy of the University of London. He taught at Igbobi College. Ekwensi is married to Eunice Anyiwo, and they had five children. He has many grandchildren, including his elder son Cyprian Ikechi Ekwensi, who is named after his grandfather, and his oldest grandchild Adrienne Tobeche Ekwensi.

### **Professional career**

Ekwensi was employed as Head of Features at the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) and by the Ministry of Information during the First Republic; he eventually became Director of the latter. He resigned his position in 1966, before the Civil War, and moved to Enugu with his family. He later served as Chairperson of the Bureau for External Publicity of Biafra, prior to its reabsorption by Nigeria.

### **Literary career**

Ekwensi wrote hundreds of short stories, radio and television scripts, and several dozen novels, including children's books. His 1954 *People of the City* was his first book to garner international attention. His novel *Drummer Boy* (1960), based on the life of Benjamin 'Kokoro' Aderounmu was a perceptive and powerful description of the wandering, homeless and poverty-stricken life of a street artist. His most successful novel was *Jagua Nana* (1961), about a Pidgin-speaking Nigerian woman who leaves her husband to work as a prostitute in a city and falls in love with a teacher. He also wrote a sequel to this, *Jagua Nana's Daughter*. in (1986). In 1968, he received the Dag Hammarskjöld International Prize in Literature. In 2001, he was made a member of the MFR and in 2006, he became a fellow of the Nigerian Academy of Letters. Cyprian Ekwensi Summary of the major novels of the author. Most of which were published by African Writers Series (AWS) and translated into other languages. For instance, *Burning Grass* and *Jagua Nana* were translated into French language under the titles: *La Brousse Ardente* and *Jagua Nana* respectively. Some of his major novels also include:

- People of the City 1954
- Jagua Nana (1st edition) 1961
- Burning Grass 1962
- Beautiful Feathers 1963
- Iska 1966
- Survive the Peace 1976
- Divided We Stand 1980

- Jagua Nana's Daughter (2nd edition) 1986

### **The death of the renown Nigerian author**

Ekwensi died on 4 November 2007 at the Niger Foundation hospital in Enugu, where he underwent an operation for an undisclosed ailment. The Association (ANA), having intended to present him with an award on 16 November 2007, converted the honor to a posthumous award.

### **Literary vision of the author**

Cyprian Ekwensi was a visionary author his work has no restriction it is made for the masses, for everyone he has no targeted audience. Nicholai L. (1981: 47) further explained that Cyprian Ekwensi's audience consist of an ordinary working class and in respect of that assertion, the author himself explains as follows;

Writing cannot be turned back now because it has already become part of our lives. It is indeed part of our lives. The Nigerians love a good story. They love spectacle. You only need to stand in a street corner where there has been a motor accident or something and everybody leaves whatever he is doing and is on the street. We like to see things. We like to hear scandalous things about people. We like to see how all these rich men are coming to a soggy end. And so on and so forth. And also we want to read about them. We want to see how we can acquire the wealth to build twenty-story buildings. And we also like to see those who have twenty story buildings being impeached for getting their wealth incorrupt way. So it is all part of the ebullience of life. It is all part of joy of living in the Africa today. This vision of Mr Ekwensi concise with his perception of African literature in general and that of Nigeria in particular. However, for him, African literature can be defined in various perceptions.

My own definition of African literature is based on characters and psychology. This means that the main theme may be anthropological, traditional, and modern, but the traits, temperature and reactions of characters will be peculiarly African due to influence of tribe, culture, and history. In respect of the content and the delimitation of his literature, Mr Ekwensi maintain that:

Cyprian Ekwensi's range embraces the Northern Savannah, the Eastern Village, Western Nigerian's sophistication and the City's decadence and degradation.

Cyprian Ekwensi also looked at the problem and prospect of African literary works. Nowadays the problem that the writer faces is not as acute as the problem was when Cyprian Ekwensi began to write. At that time, economic problem hindered grossly the performance of the literary writer. However, according to Cyprian Ekwensi, the writer of today even if he is faced with some problems he is able to find employment in various media where he can be a writer, a broadcaster, information officer, public relations, etc. and with this he can earn a decent livelihood and if he wants to do any creative writing he can then do it at his own phase. Despite this development, Cyprian Ekwensi opined that the writer of today faces some serious problems and which he presented as follows: The first problem is that In some of these media, the problem of sensitivity, the political sensitivity. In developing countries as a whole there is a great deal of sensitivity about

exposure of delicate issues when those issues are still delicate. This is quiet understandable in that these exposures tend to prejudice the issues. And even if I were in authority I would not like them. Therefore, the writer must bide his time and write in a manner which, while exposing the truth, is also able to help achieve the end he is aiming at. It is no use messing up everything simply because you must write about it, because you will be defeating the very end you are setting out to achieve. Then the other problem is the problem for book writers: publication. There are lots of printing establishment setting up but publishers are still few and far between. Some publishing houses have started up in East Africa. Here in Nigeria we have some indigenous publishing companies and some branches of international publishing companies. For the writer my own advice would be to try to expose your work as much as possible by getting on the international network. But at the same time you must have your roots at home because eventually this is where you belong. A Russian writer should be happiest in Russia and writing for his own people. So should also be an African writer. Recognition in your own home is, I think, one of the big achievements and this also brings about recognition outside but it can also work the other way around.

Similarly in an interview with the journalist on the problems of literary carrier he said:

it is impossible for the writer in our society to be writing just for the sake of art because there are so many conscience pricking problems which writing most expose and in exposing them lead the way to a consciousness of these problems and an attempt to put them right. So directly or indirectly the writer in today's Africa must be a committed writer. He must be committed to expose evils the evils of the society. And he must be committed to pointing the direction towards the future, as he understands it." With this one will see the difficulty a writer faces in Africa society in order to see the true nature of the continent

### Summary of the novel

Cyprian Ekwensi narrates the history of nomadic people of northern Nigeria through effectual study of an old man called *Mai Sunsaye* (The central character of the novel) He lives peacefully with his family which comprises of his wife *Shaitu*, *Jalla*, *Hodio*, *Rikku* and *Leibe*. One day, while he was sitting outside his hut in his camp which was situated on the outskirts of the village of *Dokan Toro*, He suddenly saw a young kanuri girl presented herself before him. She was pursued by a man who was a servant of his master called *Shehu*, the man claimed that the young girl who was named (Fatimeh) was a slave girl belonging to *Shehu* (their master) and that he was scolding her because she wanted to run away from them. The old man *Mai Sunsaye* pitied the young lady and instantly consulted his two children (*Hodio* and *Rikku*) asking for their opinion on how much he can exchange and set free the girl from her master. It was agreed that six good cows could be given to purchase the young girl. Since that time, Fatimeh (a young kanuri girl) became one of the members of the family of *Mai Sunsaye*. However, her arrival into the family, caused a serious dispute between the two young boys of *Mai Sunsaye's* family. *Hodio*, an edler brother loves *Fatimeh*. *Rikku*, a younger brother of *Hodio*, also loves *Fatimeh*. *Fatimeh*, on her own loves *Rikku* than *Hodio*. *Fatimeh* decides to vanish from the Family and lives in the

forest with another master practicing animal rearing to in order to get her own herds. Mysteriously, one day, *Mai Sunsaye* was found to be absent from the family because he promised to pursue and find out Fatimeh for Rikku. On the other hand, *Mai Sunsaye* had a political conflict with *Ardo*. *Ardo* afflicted *Mai Sunsaye* with a wondering disease called *Sukugo*. Under the effect of the disease, *Mai Sunsaye* continue to follow a flying dove which was carrying a tablet (*Laya*) under the effect of which he continued to wander endlessly in the vast forest of the Sahel savannah of northern Nigeria. In the course of his wandering, *Mai Sunsaye* was able to come across his two children *Jalla* and *Hodio* who earlier had already left the family. *Jalla* has installed himself in his own camp rearing his own herd of cattles. *Hodio*, on his own part has transformed himself into a modern city man practicing the production of sugarcane. The oldman finally after reuniting his family returned home and took over his position as the *Ardo* of the village of *Dokan Toro*. He finally died as a result of fever which might have originated from his long journey in the Savannah.

### Structure of the novel

Structure of the novel gives a detail account of the novel structure that is the plot, the steps taken by the author in order to achieve his aim. It is a generally described as the structural framework that underlines the order and manner in which a narrative is presented to a reader, listener, or viewer. In discussing the structure, three factors must be taken into Consideration the love triangle of Fatimeh, Rikku and Hodio and the subsequent night of Fatimeh and Hodio; *Mai Sunsaye's* wandering sickness, precipitated by Fatimeh's abduction; and the periodic movement of the tribe from dry land pastures to the wet land of the Niger River. In the case of *Mai Sunsaye*, the journey is undertaken at two levels, physical and psychological; the latter involves *Sunsaye's* mental state and the environment people's perceptions of his afflictions. The entire plot is developed around these journeys by *Mai Sunsaye* and his family. Their positive and negative experiences in their new environment constitute the structure, characterization and theme of the novel. However, the structure of the novel can be divided into the number chapters contained in the book, thus, about 24 chapters have been identified to form the structure of the novel.

### Thematic analysis and the significance of the novel

In contemporary literary studies, a theme is the central topic subject matter or concept the author is trying to point out, not to be confused with whatever message, moral or commentary it may be said or be interpreted as sending regarding said concept (Wikipedia 2010) Also it can be said to be subject matter or subject of discourse, discussion, writing or artistry composition (Encarta2009). Cyprian Ekwensi enveloped and portrayed in his novel *Burning Grass* the totality of the Fulani nomad ways of life, struggle, hardship they faced and their diverse cultural values and also their occupation. These were portrayed through the major character in the novel *Mai Sunsaye*. *Mai Sunsaye*, an old man, father of our children namely *Jalla*, *Hodio*, *Rikku* and *Leibe*. Faced with problem within and outside, internal problems and external rivalry with his archrival *Ardo*, *Mai Sunsaye's* predicament befell him when he got stroke with "Sokugo" the wandering disease with the sole purpose of sending him away from his home and his chieftaincy. *Mai Sunsaye* wandered around looking for

Fatimeh, Rikku's first love which he promised to bring her home for his son. Focusing his thought towards her, Mai Sunsaye Wandered the vast Fulani land moving like a wind and nature, he moved to whatever greener pasture she could find with sole purpose of looking for Fatimeh. His predicament came to an end when he found her, at last she brought an end to his sickness and was reunited with his family. He later died after being sick from the effect of the wandering disease (sokugo), his rival Ardo, on the other hand also met this end.

The dominant themes in the novel are:

### Love

Love is sacrifice, it makes you take that which you won't take on a sunny day or from anyone, love brought us here (the world) love hunts us yet it's what kept us together after along hard day or year soft or ment yet it's love that gives us the hope to live, to believe, to want to love again. Love as portrayed by Cyprian Ekwensi's novel the *Burning Grass* is the force that drove the protagonist of the novel Mai Sunsaye to wander around through nature. But one can't talk about love without talking about its circle "love circle" Rikku loves Fatimeh, Rikku loves Kantuma, Rikku loves Mai Sunsaye and Rikku loves Ligu. Looking at the trending circle of love one will see that the whole novel circle around the theme of love. Rikku the favored and most loved son of Mai Sunsaye fell in love with a Kanuri slave girl Fatimeh she was bought by his father from Malam Shehuerr and boy at high price, knowing fully that they can't consummate their affection, Hodiolooped with Fatimeh, Hodiolooped Mai Sunsaye's second son, he did that out of love he has for her while she love his younger brother Rikku. The events brought the beginning of the predicament that torn the family apart, whose main source is love which comes hand in hand with hatred. Secondly, Rikku loves Kantu main their case, love brought death and war to Kantuma who was the most beautiful woman in Kontago who is highly respected by all men, her beauty cast across all manners of men, prince and rich men beg to have her by their side yet none had her. Kantuma was struck by Rikku's gentle, obedient and handsome posture. He possesses that which not all men had and that which Kantumafancies a lot. It is out of love she had for him that made her fought for him and in the end she died to protect him, this event turns Rikku's life apart as he no longer had interest in loving any one anymore. In this case one will see that love brought hope to those two but because it also carries hate with it, it also consumed them which led to the death of Kantuma. Thirdly, Rikku versus Ligu is the love and affection she had for him that made her lost and fought for him. In looking at this, we will see how Ligu "The Champion Cattle grazer of whom they sing for" lost some cattle large number actually to the bodejo's. Because of Rikku and also fought for his freedom. This happened because of the love she had for him. In contrast to the above point, one will see that it's the love she had for him that made her lost to the bodejo and a band on her cattle to fight for him. Lastly, the love for family as portrayed in Cyprian Ekwensi's novel is a strong old and their strength, even though my work showed love to be the cause of a down fall and lost, love can also be the strength that makes one stand and fight again so as to gain what is lost. Though sometimes, when something is lost it is lost forever (death) yet there are things we can take back when lost. As shown in the novel, the family (Mai Sunsaye's family), fought Ardo the archrival of Mai Sunsaye with the people that love them to regain their place in the Fulani society and their chieftaincy.

### Superstitious believes

This is the belief of super natural powers that possess treat or advantage to one self depending on how and who uses it. In the *Burning Brass* superstitious belief is shown in the case of Mai Sunsaye predicament after being stroke with the wandering sickness by sending a bird to him, which made him wander around. The purpose of the sokugo is to make him wander without purpose or destination to the world's end but in his case he had purpose and destination which was to find Fatimeh Rikku's first love, this shows that super natural acts work on you depending on your state of mind. Furthermore, it is also portrayed when Mai Sunsaye found fatimeh and she realized he had the disease (wandering sickness) Sokugo. She gave him some magic potion to cure him from the disease. It was also portrayed in the making of baduhu (giver of darkness) and charms during the test of man hood Sharro. When Jalla failed in the sharro in quest to seek shaitu's hand in marriage due to lack of readiness spiritually, this shows the importance of their charms to them (the Fulani)

### The Fulani culture(cattle rearing and sharro)

In 2002, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) described culture as follows: "Culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs". Culture is the total way of life, character and characteristics of the people and custom. Culture is who we are, what we do, what we say, what we think, what we wear, we are different from different places but that what makes us special. The custom of the Fulani nomad, this will be portrayed in relation to cattle rearing and sharro the test of man hood. In looking at the cattle rearing Cyprian Ekwensi portrayed the totality of a Fulani man and woman around his or her cattle and their needs. In his opening paragraph (first page) he started by showing the nature of the grass, its importance and the need to move southward with the cattle in search of grazing lands. When they begin to burn the grass in northern Nigeria it is time the herds men to be moving the cattle southwards to the bank of the great river and the hunters, lurking on the fumes and train their eyes to catch the finest flicker of the bee as hardening from their hiding places. This passage portrays the importance of their cattle to them and nature as they cheat it by moving in order to satisfy their needs i.e "grazing field's healthy one", the Fulani first, second, and third order of priority is his cattle then anything can follow their back. Cyprian Ekwensi showed the greatness of the Fulani how the numbers of their cattle and how bravely they move them in order without losing anyone. Cattle rearing is their occupation as portrayed in case of Jalla Mai Sunsaye first on and Ligu the champion cattle grazer. They showed the importance of their cattle to the man their means of livelihood as they provide them with milk to drink and meat to eat when the need arises. The novel circles around them overment of the cattle which serves as a finding key to what is lost or mysteries. For example when they were looking for Fatimeh the only thing they saw was white cattle and a lady, the question is why white cattle and a lady not a lady in white with white cattle. I will say that this is done by the author to show the importance of the cattle. Secondly when Ligu introduced her self to Kantuma after a dramatic show case. The only thing she could say is "Ligu the champion cattle grazer of whom they

*singfor* "This shows importance of the cattle to their existence and their identity. Looking at the case of "Sharro" which is one of the most important stages in Fulani community which every young man must pass through is highlighted by the author to show the importance of their culture. The author took a comparison with Jalla as he failed in the sharro because he wasn't prepared spiritually this shows the spirituality of the Fulani culture and how important their charms and baduhu to them. Having said that sharro & cattle rearing are two things a Fulani man or woman engage his or herself at one point in their life if not all point.

### Conflict and rivalry

Coser (1956 p.121) defines conflict as struggles over values, to neutralize or injure or eliminate other contenders similarly Oyeshola (2005) argue that conflict emerges, if sharp disagreement or chase occur between and among divergent ideas, interest, people or nations. Rivalry in this case is what happens after a conflict has occurred, the need to go against whatever other proposed to say and will do anything to get his or her desired goal. In contrast to the novel conflict and rivalry is the order of the day as it can be related to the case of Mai Sunsaye and Ardo why? Because it is the cause of the up rise of Mai Sunsaye's predicament. Looking at it, it is the conflict between the two that lead to his wandering sickness which Ardo is the cause why? Because of conflict of interest and the rivalry that also the decimation of Mai Sunsaye's home which lead his family running for help and shelter. It can also be associated with Malam Shehu and Mai Sunsaye and sons and the death of Kantuma because of conflict lives lost and peace was found where it is found.

### The theme of death in the novel

The end of everyman is death, after along joyful or hardship, fun or sadness the end is death, death is an inevitable fact of life, everyone will surely taste it. Death as portrayed in the novel can be seen in the likes of Kantuma who died as a result of her love for Rikku and Mai Sunsaye. Mai Sunsaye, as for him, he died after being sick from the effect of the wandering sickness. Also Malam Shehu who died in the battle for Rikku's freedom. One will say, the plot of a blue skies and greener days end with tears and death either that of a loved one or an enemy so is the case in the *Burning Grass*, after all struggle victory was achieved. The author's conception of the theme of death is summarized in a proverb which says: "*on the day of death, there is no medicine*" (118)

### Conclusion

The pastoral nature of the Fulani society is evidently portrayed and very much highlighted in his character Mai Sunsaye and his family, Mai Sunsaye is a clear picture of a complete Fulani man. After the elopement of Fatimeh with Hodio, Mai Sunsaye's predicament began as he could not tell his real purpose as he always hide behind find Fatimeh, even his son tried to talk about his wandering disease he disagreed and took off in search of emptiness, However Rikku on the other hand seems to be on the edge, as he found his way to his brother and later ligu "The champion cattle grazer" and then to Kantuma. Mai Sunsaye's reason soon caught up with him and then he realized his curse and where wandering disease came from and how it disappeared. Mai Sunsaye is drawn as man who takes family over everything and a man who has extreme love for

Rikku and his wife Shaitu. Ardo on the other hand, is a man who has an everlasting hatred for Mai Sunsaye and his family. After critically examining Cyprian Ekwensi's *Burning Grass*, it has been found that one's exposure to hardship, torment by supernatural means, or conflict shapes one for what it is to come and one learns more from experience than anything. The nomadic practices identified in the text also have great importance in their ways of life. The totality of a Fulani man and woman is circle round his cattle as portrayed in the novel the need to find for the cattle is highly emphasis as they constantly move in search of feeding ground. Furthermore spirituality as an important factor of their culture as every successful man in sharro must have charms and baduhu. Not forgetting love as the moving force of the text as it circle over and over in the novel. The whole novel revolves around the movement of Fulani & their cattle. However, the symbolic meaning of the novel can be interpreted as the world as it moves by wiping out the old tradition to give room for new values. To conclude the character Mai Sunsaye exit and tried to balance his failure to get Fatimeh back for his son and stop his family from falling apart, how remorse full he was when everything came crashing and all seems to be lost yet found in another line.

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