

Notes on Wodaabe Love

institution of marriage – our's 50% end in divorce – value love and happiness over family

Wodaabe: nomadic pastoralists living scattered throughout West Africa, following “transhumance” seasonal migration pattern

– have an ingenious system that allows family stability and romantic attachments – two kinds of marriages: one for love which usually begins at annual dances when men dress in all their finery and dance before the women. A woman then offers to run off with a man who catches her fancy. If he accepts, then his new bride must take her place beside the wife or wives he already has. The wives will either accept her or leave. Her former husband may not like being abandoned but there is nothing that he can do about it other than look for a new wife himself. The system gives a woman considerable freedom of choice but she pays a steep price: the children remain with the husband