

KOREDUGA — “SACRED JESTERS” OF THE MANDEN (WEST AFRICA)

Koreduga or so-called “traditional jesters” are a rather closed group in Mali and Guinea, often referred to as a secret union. They can be found at any festival or even funeral. You can recognize them by their costumes and attributes — they are dressed in old ridiculous clothes or just bright costumes decorated with a lot of unnecessary things; they behave provocatively absurdly. But in fact, there is a whole philosophy of the Koreduga. Not only they perform an entertaining function, but also are good healers, conduct rituals, solve personal and social problems. They have a lot in common with shamans. They are called “counter-society” — because they say and do things that are the opposite of what is expected. The path of the Koreduga is difficult: it consists of several stages of initiation, as a result of which each Koreduga becomes a bearer of wisdom. The Koreduga consider the vulture as their symbol and have certain fetishes. The legends about the connection of the Koreduga with the vulture vary greatly among the Bamana and Senuso (peoples of West Africa). The Koreduga are also connected with the main secret unions of the Manden — primarily with the Kore society, but also with the Komo: they say that they connect the highest leaders of the unions with other people, carry out various assignments of the unions and participate in their rituals. Their role in society is great, the Manden peoples themselves are proud of their tradition and support it in every possible way. Although the Koreduga union is undergoing some changes, primarily due to Islam, it is still very popular and plays an important role in Mali and Guinea.

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