

From Nomads to Nationals, From Nationals to Undesirable Elements: The Case of the Mbororo/Fulani in North West Cameroon 1916-2008 A Historical Investigation

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Abstract: The Fulani (Mbororo) are a minority group perceived as migrants and strangers by local North West groups who consider themselves their hosts and landlords. They are predominantly nomadic people located almost exclusively within the savannah zone of West and Central Africa. Their original homeland is said to be the Senegambia region. From Senegal, the Fulani continued their movement along side their cattle and headed to Northern Nigeria. Uthman Dan Fodio's 19th century jihad movement and epidemic outbreaks force them to move from Northern Nigeria to Northern Cameroon. From Northern Cameroon they moved down South and started penetrating the North West Region in the early 20th century.

This article critically examines and considers the case of the Fulani in the North West Region of Cameroon and their recent claims to regional citizenship and minority status. The paper begins by presenting the migration, settlement and ultimate acquisition of the status of nationals by the nomadic cattle Fulani in North West Cameroon. It also analysis the difficulties encountered by this nomadic group to fully integrate themselves into the region.

In the early 20th century (more precisely 1916) when they arrived the North West Region, they were warmly received by their hosts. This was thanks to the economic input seen in the cattle they introduced in the region and the heavy taxes (Jangali tax) paid to the government. With time, the quest for grazing land in an environment of increasing population of farmers put the Fulani on daily conflicts with their neighbouring farmers. The Fulani were henceforth regarded as 'undesirable strangers' and the local farming population clamoured for their expulsion.

The Fulani have long entertained patron-client and host-guest relations with their North West neighbours, which facilitated their integration into the local community and their political representation. Beginning from 1972, with President Ahidjo in power, they were not more perceived as 'strangers'. Nevertheless, farmer-grazier conflict kept on being a recurrent issue in the region. Thanks to the liberty laws of the 1990s, the Fulani changed their strategies, aiming at direct representation to the state and its resources. In 1992 the Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA) was founded and gradually developed into a nationally influential ethnic elite association. While claiming to be an indigenous population, the Fulani have argued that they have no other home and also portray themselves as an endangered minority who's cultural and economic rights have to be protected.

Introduction

Historical Presentation of the Fulani in the North West Region of Cameroon

The Fulani are predominantly a pastoralist community from West Africa numbering approximately 14 million people. They are of mixed Sub-Saharan African and Berber origin. First recorded as living in the Senegambia region, they are now scattered through out the area of the Sudan, from Senegal, Nigeria to Cameroon.¹ Both as nomadic and later sedentary people, they have played an important part in the history of West Africa. The Fulani constitute part of a major group of people in Africa called Fulbe. They were characterised by a common history of civilization, language and culture. Due to a rinderpest pandemic which decimated herds of African cattle in the mid and late 1880s, the Fulani clans began migrating to various destinations across West and Central Africa.² From there, they started moving with their cattle and arrived Northern Nigeria in the 15th Century. While in Northern Nigeria, several factors made them to move elsewhere,

¹ J.D. Fage, *An Introduction to the History of West Africa*, 3rd edition, Cambridge University Press, 1962, pp. 4-6.

² M.P. Pelican, "Getting along in the Grassfields. Interethnic Relations and Identity Politics in North West Cameroon", PhD thesis, Martin Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg, Germany, Halle, 2006, pp.150-155.

among which were drought, disasters, epidemic, diseases, and the Jihad wars of the 19th Century.³ From Northern Nigeria, they migrated to the Adamawa region of North Cameroon. Their search for greener pastures, fertile soils and good climatic conditions made them to also leave the Adamawa to move down south. They finally arrived the North West Region in the early 20th C having arrived the North West Region; they were warmly received by the early settlers of the region. Due to the hospitable nature of the local population, they finally established their settlements.⁴

The Fulani are seen as culturally and religiously different from their North West neighbours. Having settled in the North West only in the 20th Century, they are considered late comers. They are also seen as nomads, that is people constantly on the move and with no permanent home. Yet despite their reputation as strangers and migrants, the Fulani have been able to challenge local autochthony discourses. By claiming regional citizenship and minority status to the Cameroonian state, they have attained the same legal entitlement to political representation, natural and government resources as their North West neighbours.⁵

The Fulani community is internally diversified, comprising members of two sub-groups, namely *Jaafun* and *Aku*. Originally, both groups dwelled in the Kano area. In the course of the 19th Century they adopted divergent migration trajectories and developed distinct sub-ethnic identities. The *Jaafun* started entering the Western Grassfields in the early 20th century. They came from Northern Cameroon, mainly the Adamawa plateau, and established themselves on the Bamenda Highlands.⁶ The *Aku* followed later, from the 1930s onwards. They entered the North West Region coming from Nigeria, mainly from the Jos plateau, and settled on the lowlands. We are going to examine the Fulani first of all as migrants, then nationals and finally how they became regarded as undesirable elements.⁷

Geographical Location of the North West Region of Cameroon

Our area of study is the North West Region of Cameroon. The North West Region constitutes parts of the territory of Southern Cameroons. It is found in the Western highlands of Cameroon. It lies between latitudes 5° 40', and 7° to the North of the equator, and between longitudes 9° 45' and 11° 10', to the East of the Meridian. It is bordered to the South West by the South West Region, to the South by the West Region, to the east by Adamawa Region, and to the North by the Federal Republic of Nigeria.⁸

The North West Region is one of the most populated regions in Cameroon. It has one major metropolitan city: Bamenda. The region saw an increase in population from about 1.2million in 1987, to an estimated 1.8million people in 2001. The population density, at 99.12 people per square kilometres is higher than the national average of 22.6 people per square kilometre. The region urban growth rate is 7.95%, while the rural growth rate at 1.16%. The North West Region is made up of administrative divisions.⁹

The region formally known as province was created in 1972 with five divisions. These were Mezam, Momo, Bui, Donga-Mantung and Menchum. Ngoketunjia Division was later carved out of Mezam while Boyo Division was carved out of Menchum and Donga-Mantung Divisions. They are thirty-one sub-Divisions in the North West Region.¹⁰

From Nomads to Nationals

Migration and Settlement of Fulani to North West Cameroon

Fulani as earlier said originated from West Africa. From there, they migrated along side their cattle to Northern Nigeria. From Northern Nigeria, they move to the Adamawa region of Cameroon. The first Fulani to enter the North West Region were members of the *Jaafun* community of Iompta in the Adamawa. They

³ Ibid ; N.F. Awasom "The Hausa and Fulani in the Bamenda GrassLand (1903-1960)", Third Cycle Doctorate thesis in History, University of Yaounde, 1984, pp. 14-15.

⁴ Pelican, "Interethnic Relations", pp. 150-155.

⁵ M. Pelican, "Mbororo Claims to Regional Citizenship and Minority Status (North West Cameroon)", paper presented at the ECAS 2/AEGIS Conference, Leiden, 11-14 July 2007 ; pp. 1-5.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid; Pelican, "Interethnic Relations", pp. 150-154.

⁸ P.S. Ndele, "Inter-tribal Conflicts in the North West Province of Cameroon: Causes, Consequences and Perspectives", Maitrise Dissertation, Catholic University of Central Africa, 1998.

⁹ A.S Neba, *Modern Geography of the Republic of Cameroon, Second Edition*, Camden, Neba publishers, 1987, pp.170-171; N.N. Emmanuel, "Settlement, Grazier or Agricultural Land: A Confrontation of Interest in the North West Province of Cameroon", Journals of the Faculty of Letter and Social Sciences, University of Yaounde, N° 10, 1981, p. 175.

¹⁰ Ibid.

established themselves in the vicinity of Bamenda, the regional capital, in 1916.¹¹ Their settlement was named Sabga after its initiator Ardo Sabga, and later became the headquarters of the Fulani community in North West Cameroon. As time went on many more Fulani were attracted into the North West Region. This was because of the availability of pasture, good climate, fertile soils and soil springs found in the region.¹²

The British colonial administration encouraged the influence of Fulani pastoralists as a means of diversifying the regional economy and increasing its tax income. Local chiefs welcomed the pastoralists' establishment on their chiefdom's territory as they paid tributes and acknowledged their hosts territorial and political primacy. In respect of the fact that population densities were relatively low, farming and pasture lands abundant, crop damage was a recurrent problem, as the Fulani's practice of extensive grazing and seasonal transhumance collided with the North West system of shifting cultivation.¹³ In consequence, North West farmers looked on the pastoralists' settlement with reservation, and occasionally responded with public protest and violence. The British colonial administration was faced with the predicament of implementing its policy of indirect rule and, at the same time, protecting the Fulani against the hostility of North West farmers and exactions by local chiefs. The result was changing policies in the management of farmer-grazier conflicts.¹⁴

Despite the tense atmosphere that existed between local farmers and Fulani graziers, the Fulani succeeded in establishing permanent settlements in the 1940s. They started practising transhumance. This trend towards sedentarisation was further endorsed by the administrative imposition of grazing rules that restricted pastoral mobility. The Fulani subsequently developed a conscious political identity. They appealed for direct recognition and representation to the colonial administration. However, the British headquarters in Nigeria denied them the status of a politically independent minority and classified them as "strangers" rather than indigenes.¹⁵ In response, Fulani leaders formed a Fulani council that, although its existence was never officially acknowledged, effectively acted as an intermediary between the Fulani population and the British administration. Furthermore, the British granted the Muslim community limited judicial autonomy. Yet it was only after Cameroon's independence and in the context of constitutional changes in 1972 that the Fulani were given Cameroonian citizenship.¹⁶

From Nationals to Undesirable Elements

Fulani Claims to Citizenship Right

Changes in Fulani mobility and economy affected also the socio-cultural sphere. With growing wealth, many Fulani aimed at improving their living conditions by investing in consumer goods and Islamic education. It was at a later stage that Fulani individuals became aware of the practical advantages of western education and started sending some of their children to school. By the late 1980s just a few Fulani had undergone secondary or university education. Nevertheless, they were also instrumental in exploring new political strategies.¹⁷

Beginning from the second half of the 20th century, the Fulani started encountering socio-economic difficulties due to increase in population density and competition over natural resources. Many families experienced gradual impoverishment. While the Fulani family sizes continuously increased, the rate of growth in cattle stagnated due to the effects of overgrazing. More to that, farmer-grazier conflicts became very rampant in the Northwest Region. Many Fulani spent considerable wealth on administrative and judicial procedures that benefited state agents rather than producing lasting solutions. This was mostly notice in areas such as Menchum, Donga and Mantung, Bui and Mezam Divisions.¹⁸

More to that, as a legacy of the colonial period, the Fulani lacked formal institutions of political representation, and largely relied on patron-client relationships with local North Westerners in defending their economic and political interest. This arrangement, however, proved ineffective in facing influential entrepreneurs who began to institute private and state ranches on Fulani grazing land. As a result, the Fulani in

¹¹ Etienne Tazo and Unus Haman, "Contribution of land use Conflicts to Peasant Impoverishment: The case Opposing the Mbororo Pastoralists and the Indigenous Crop Cultivators of Mezam Division (North West Cameroon)", *Revue de Geographie du Cameroun*, Volume xvii, No 1, 2006, pp. 150-154.

¹² Pelican, "Interethnic Relations", pp. 150-154.

¹³ Awasom, "Hausa and Fulani", pp. 14-20.

¹⁴ P.N. Nkwi, and J.P. Warnier, *Elements for a History of the Western Grassfields*, Yaounde, Publication of the Department of Sociology, 1982, pp. 83-86.

¹⁵ S. Hickey, "The Role of non-Governmental Development Organisation in Challenging Exclusion in Africa : Participatory Development and the Politics of Citizenship Formation Amongst the Mbororo-Fulani in Northwest Cameroon", Unpublished PhD thesis, Staffordshire University, 2002, pp. 113-120.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Pelican, "Citizenship and Minority Status", p. 6.

¹⁸ Emmanuel, "Confrontation of Interest", pp. 175-176; Etienne and Unusa, "Land use Conflicts", pp. 47-48.

the North West experienced themselves as a politically marginalised and economically exploited minority. The British colonial administration had classified them as ‘strangers’ and had denied them entry into their socio-political community constituted a constant source of dependency and exploitation.¹⁹

The policy response of the colonial administration during the 1940s and 1950s resulted from a series of internal debates over the issue of Fulani citizenship and land rights. This debate centred in part on the Native Land Rights Ordinance that declared all land to be ‘native’, with a native defined as “a person whose parents were members of any tribe or tribes indigenous to the Cameroon”. Those in favour of granting the Fulani land rights argued that without right, the Fulani would not undertake obligations relating to maintaining pastures and administering tax collection.²⁰ These officials also asked if the pastoralists are to continue to be treated as strangers although contributing more to the revenue of the country than the indigenous land owners.

The counter position involved rival colonial officials siding with the farming population against what was constructed as an essentially hostile immigrant group. Farmers opposed attempts to indigenize the Fulani into the North West Region, leading to “renewed widespread ‘Fulaniphobia’. Fulani *rugas* found within grazing zones on the lowlands were set on fire. The clandestine maiming of cattle was common place”.²¹ As a matter of fact, the citizenship status of the Fulani in the North West was thus a highly contentious issue through out the colonial era. The failure to resolve the dispute over whether the Fulani were ‘Strangers’ or ‘potential natives’ meant ‘economic citizens’ on the basis of their tax contributions but with few civic, political or social rights. This secondary status led to a degree of livelihood insecurity, and worsened the strained relations between the Fulani and the farming population.²²

Political Inclusion of the Fulani

After independence, the Fulani were confronted with a situation of political insecurity to which many responded with flight. In 1961, the population of British Cameroons was given a chance to vote either for reunification with formerly French administered Cameroon, or for incorporation into independent Nigeria. Fulani did not fully participate in the voting exercise. Majority of them were considered as strangers. Even among them, opinions differed while most of them were in support of reunification, with the hope of attaining full citizenship. Many Fulani favoured the alternative of joining Nigeria as they were already familiar with political and ecological condition there. With the Pendulum swinging toward reunification, Fulani became the targets of local North Westerners animosity against perceived foreigners from Nigeria.²³

Cameroon’s transition to independence and reunification in the early 1960s was accompanied by administrative changes that informed Fulani economic strategies and altered their legal status. With the introduction of the French administrative and legal system, the Fulani were released from their subordination to Native Authorities in collecting taxes. In terms of citizenship formation amongst the Fulani, the first decades of Post colonial rule after 1961 were part characterized by a return to the margins.²⁴

Without the support of the newly independent administration in Bamenda, the Fulani council collapsed with two years of independence. Army barracks were erected where the council held its horse displays, and the administration ceased to call the council together. Officials and *ArDOS* did hold an annual meeting in Bamenda to decide on cattle movement, although Fulani participation declined greatly over the 1960s. The two most prominent Fulani leaders²⁵ participated in the West Cameroon House of Chiefs until its closure in 1972. The key channel for citizenship participation in the post colonial era, namely the state administration, was inaccessible to the generally uneducated Fulani, most of whom continued to see formal education as both irrelevant to their mode of livelihood and inimical to Islam. Although their remote location also played a role in reducing their access to government services more generally, few *ArDOS* participated in the National Conferences on the 1972 referendum, although there is evidence that many Fulani did vote.²⁶

Through out the rule of president Ahidjo, there appear to have been no official attempts to treat the North West Fulani as a political constituency, despite executive attention to the politics of ethnic regional balance. Indeed, Ahidjo did specifically address Fulani leaders about political participation during a ceremonial visit to Bamenda at the opening of the Santa-Bamenda road in the early 1970s; he advised that politics was a dangerous game for the Fulani to be involved in, presumably to their marginal status and lack of political

¹⁹ Hickey, “Non Governmental Development”, pp. 113-120.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid; Pelican, “Citizenship and Minority Status”, pp. 8-12.

²³ Hickey, “Non Governmental Development”, pp. 115-120.

²⁴ Ibid, Pelican, “Citizenship and Minority Status”, pp. 8-12.

²⁵ These were Ardo Sabga of Sabga and Ardo Umaru of Wum

²⁶ Ibid; Pelican, “Citizenship and Minority Status”, pp. 8-12.

experience. Nonetheless, a close observer of Fulani politics notes that Ahidjo's surprise departure from office in 1982 brought increased insecurity for the Fulani, as they were often told "your time is over and it is ours now" by farming Christians.²⁷

Under Ahidjo's regime, they qualified as Cameroonian citizens, but were subsumed under the category of 'northerners' on account of their Muslim identity and Fulbe ethnicity. Consequently, Fulani who were born and grew up in the North West still counted as 'strangers' to the area, with limited rights to the region's natural and state resources. It was only with Cameroon's democratisation in the 1990s that the Fulani eventually obtained the opportunity to engage in the political arena and to express their interest and grievances directly to the state.²⁸

An account of Fulani voting behaviour in the North West during the 1990s reveals two characteristics. First, that level of voter participation amongst the Fulani were lower than most groups in the North West, and were particularly low amongst Fulani women. Second, the majority of Fulani voters cast their votes for the ruling Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement party (CPDM). Of all the people interviewed, only an opposition mayor claimed that most Fulani voted for the main opposition Social Democratic Front party (SDF). It was alleged that only educated Fulani voted SDF. The National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP), which had its power-base amongst Muslims in Northern Cameroon, was not seen as a serious party by the Fulani or other groups in the North West. Most Fulani voted CPDM, because they thought that it was only government that could protect them.²⁹

State led intimidation thus helped the Fulani in conflict with their predominantly SDF- supporting neighbours, and the antagonistic relationship worsened when the SDF promised to give farmers more land should they gain power. Violent attacks on Fulani communities rose steeply. Many Fulani houses were destroyed around 1992, after the Presidential elections. Some Fulani who voted were attacked on their returned from pooling centres. In a nutshell, while Cameroon's period of democratic protest and political liberation in the early 1990s did widen the opportunities for citizenship participation, the general response of the Northwest Fulani was closely informed by their status as a marginal and political subordinate group within the region.³⁰

In 1990, the current regime under President Paul Biya introduced a multi-party system, and subsequently endorsed the formation of ethnic and regional elite association as vehicles of political representation to the state and its resources. It was in this context that a growing preoccupation with 'autochthony' and 'belonging' emerged, which was promoted by the Biya regime to weaken the opposition.³¹

Fulani Responses to New Political and Legal Avenues

As a result, a variety of established and new political avenues opened up and was soon explored by many regional and ethnic groups, including the Fulani. Most effective among them was the formation of ethnic elite associations to act as representatives to the state and to international development agencies. Thus, in 1992 educated Fulani individuals founded MBOSCUDA, the Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association.³² While alternative associations were created in the same periods, MBOSCUDA advanced to the most vocal and effective organ of Fulani self-representation.

It should be noted that other paths of political lobbying have been explored, often with the support of MBOSCUDA members. In line with their North West counterparts, Fulani leaders formed a chiefs' association, entitled North West Lamidos Forum. Although this body did not function for long, the demand for a Fulani leaders' forum continues to exist.³³

One other strategy of endorsing Fulani interest vis-à-vis the state was via the co-optation of high ranking officials. In 2002 the Fulani counted two members of parliament as ambassadors of their cause, namely Peter Abety, Minister for Special Duties, and Manu Jaji Gidado, attaché at the Presidency. Similar to their North West neighbours' practice of awarding traditional titles to their elite members, the two were given the title of *Waziri*, messenger and chiefs representative respectively. In the main time Abety has been discharged from

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid; S. Hickey, "Caught at the Crossroads: Citizenship, Marginality and the Mbororo Fulani in North West Cameroon", Annual International Conference, Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, 2004, pp. 8-14.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Pelican, "Citizenship and Minority Status", pp. 8-12.

³³ Ibid.

office but continues to support Fulani interest in his position as University lecturer in Yaounde. In addition, new sympathisers have been won among current officials.³⁴

MBOSCUDA is a national, membership-based organisation with approximately 30,000 members and branches in nearly all regions. It runs a number of regional programmes, aimed at the revitalisation of Fulani cultural practices, the improvement of Fulani women's socio-economic situation, the promotion of Fulani children's education, the strengthening of civil awareness, and the improvement of pastoral conditions. The organisation's most active branch is in the North West Region. MBOSCUDA significantly contributed to promoting civil awareness among Fulani and also succeeded in redefining Fulani political and legal status vis-à-vis the state. In 2000 new computerised identity cards were issued and MBOSCUDA encouraged Fulani citizens to register.³⁵

It should be recalled that in the previous system, Fulani were generally registered as being born in Northern Cameroon, the new identity cards indicated their actual birth place. Fulani hence qualified as regional citizens with claims and rights to natural resources and political representation in their home area. MBOSCUDA also encouraged Fulani individuals to stand as candidates in municipal elections and to actively participate in community development projects.³⁶

Many Fulani in the North West acquired the new identity cards and expressed their satisfaction with being recognised as local citizens. As they argued, they have been living in their current settlement area for several decades. Their children have grown up with North West children, have learnt their neighbours' language, have adopted a number of North West customs, and don't know any other home. More to that, they have integrated themselves into local North West communities, participating in communal activities and supporting the local North West Chief. They thus see themselves as able members of North West Chiefdoms, and claim rights and belonging in the same way as their North West neighbours. Worth mentioning is also the fact that some influential Fulani communities, such as the one in Sabga, have developed an exceptional preoccupation with their group history as a way of endorsing their claims to power and land.³⁷

The Fulani are also concerned with their entitlement to grazing land, as the competition over land has increased due to growing population density both in humans and animals. While a few long-established and influential individuals have acquired land titles, the majority rely on the good-will of local administrators and North West Chiefs. To counter this situation, MBOSCUDA has organised workshops to alert Fulani, North Westers and administrators to the rights of Fulani citizens. Furthermore, the organisation has offered legal advice in land disputes.

MBOSCUDA has also been instrumental in redefining Fulani national citizenship. Alongside collaborating with international development agencies, it associated with transnational human and minority rights organisations, including Amnesty International, Survival International, Minority Rights Group International (MRG) and the World Intellectual Property Organisation. The international backing proved helpful in defying human rights abuses.³⁸

More to that, in line with the United Nations' proclamation of the decade of 'Indigenous peoples' MBOSCUDA portrayed the Fulani as an 'indigenous minority' whose cultural survival had to be protected. MBOSCUDA officials were enrolled to participate in government programmes for the development of indigenous minorities and autochthonous peoples. In consequence, in December 2004 it was publicly announced that the Cameroonian government recognised the Fulani alongside the 'pygmies' as 'Indigenous minorities'.³⁹ Furthermore, MBOSCUDA representatives have acted as resource persons to the working committees of the United Nations and the International Labour Organisation concerned with indigenous and Tribal peoples.⁴⁰

Fulani Access to Justice and Promotion of Land Rights

MBOSCUDA's access to justice programme is relentlessly advocating for the government to re-allocate rural areas to agriculture and grazing in the entire North West Region of Cameroon and that has been done only in Menchum Division out of seven divisions in the region. The re-allocation was done in Menchum Division when some time in the year 2005, the farmers of the Wum sub-division carried out a series of public demonstrations requesting the graziers to leave the entire sub-division, claiming that the graziers had occupied

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid ; M, Pelican, "Mbororo Claims to Regional Citizenship and Minority Status in North West Cameroon", *Africa, the Journal of the International African Institute*, Volume 78, Number 4, 2008, pp. 540-560.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

most of their farmlands. In the course of the conflict, many houses of the graziers were destroyed, their properties looted with many severely injured.⁴¹

Some of the graziers whose houses were destroyed took up residence at the local police and gendarmerie stations and a lot of pressure was put on the government, which set up a commission that re-allocated rural areas to agriculture and grazing. The achievement of the Access to justice programme of MBOSCUA also included the recovery of the sum of 3.835,000FCFA extorted by corrupt government officials from 8 families, over 400 cases of intervention documented on soft ware across three years (2004-2007); 150 Fulani youths trained as Para legals/psych-legal-counsellors, recovered 46 cattle seized from Fulani pastoralists by corrupt government Officials, a divisional farmer-grazier commission made of only farmers and graziers established for the exploiters of the Ndop wet land areas, facilitated three workshops for traditional leaders (Fons and Ardo'en) and Government Officials on Democracy, Good Governance and Farmer-Grazier conflicts management and transformation.⁴²

However, it has become clear that there is no generally applicable and easy solution to farmer-grazier conflicts and land disputes. It has also been realised that the Fulani more than the local farmers usually suffer heavy losses as a result of those conflicts. Back in 1979, twenty cattle were killed belonging to Ardo Gaga of Pinyin. No serious action was taken against that act. When the administrative and judicial authorities took the matter to court, bribery and corruption displaced the matter thus continuously worsening relations between graziers and farmers. Also in 1990, twenty cattle belonging to Ardo Juli of Njong were killed in a similar manner.⁴³ Although serious measures were taken to enforce the payment of such damage, farmer-grazier conflicts continued to persist. With the creation of a sub-division office in Santa in 1992, a week hardly past without five cases of farmer-grazier conflicts being reported to the Divisional Officer.

At the beginning of 2000, farmers in Wum, Menchum Division whose problems were unresolved invaded Fulani settlements, resulting to the killing of four Fulani. In 2001, another Fulani was murdered in Waindo village. Fulani retaliation led to further deaths. The administration in usual manner stepped in to manage the situation. The seriousness of the destructions in 2003 obliged the Aghem women to take the paramount Fon Bah Mbi III including other chiefs' hostage for two months in his palace. This provoked the intervention of Governor koumpa Issa and Simon Achidi Achu who arrived Wum, and negotiated with the women.⁴⁴

In 2004, destructions persisted and demonstrations resurfaced. For the second time, the paramount Fon and other chiefs were taken hostage in the Wum palace for over 90days. During this same period, the Aghem youths formed a militant group and were waiting on seeing justice triumph. In 2005, the situation degenerated as both camps started arming themselves. The Aghem youths constantly terrorized the Fulani. They made their intention known to send all the Fulani population packing out of Wum. The administration reacted by deploying troops from Bamenda. Some youths together with chiefs who sympathised with them were arrested and taken to Bamenda.⁴⁵

In 2001, Alhaji Baba Danpullo forcefully occupied more than five kilometre squared of the Sabga communal grazing land in Mezam Division and constructed there in semi permanent structures with wood for his shepherds, thereby extending the Elba Ranch from Ndawara in Boyo Division to Sabga in Mezam Division.⁴⁶

The Sabga Fulani population through their paramount traditional leader, the lamido and MBOSCUA, lodged a series of complaints to the administration of Tubah sub-Division where Sabga is found and the administration of Mezam Division where Sabga is found and the administration of Mezam Division and no immediate action was taken to redress the situation. On the 29th of April 2002, some angry Fulani youths from Sabga went to the encroachment piece of land and burnt down the structures constructed there by Alhaji Baba Dan Pullo. Before doing that, the youths had informed Alhaji Baba and the administration of Tubah sub-division and Mezam Division of their intention. As a result, during the day of the incidence, Alhaji Baba's agents, the

⁴¹ R.N. Fon and M. Ndamba, "MBOSCUA'S Access to Justice and Promotion of Land Rights for the Mbororo of the North West of Cameroon", April 2008, pp. 1-17.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ J.M. Amadou, "The Advent, Organisation and Integration of the Fulani into the Menchum Community from early 20th century to 2003", D.E.A Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2004, p. 9-10.

⁴⁵ C.F. Nchia, "The Farmer-Grazier Conflicts in the Aghem Federation 1950-2005", Maitrise Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2006, p. 25.

⁴⁶ Fon and Ndamba, "MBOSCUA'S Access to Justice", pp. 1-17.

Gendarmerie and the administration, represented by the assistant divisional officer of Tubah sub-division were present. The Fulani youths had a video Camera man to film the destruction.⁴⁷

A few hours after the incident, the video Camera man in the person of Usman Haman, presented himself to the Gendarmerie Officers who were at the site. He was immediately arrested and carried to the Elba Ranch where his video Camera was seized and he was severely tortured by Gendarmerie Officers. On the 13th of May 2002, the High Court of Mezam Judicial division granted bail to Usman Haman, following an application that the lawyer for MBOSCUA made in court. Yaouba Umaru, Yunusa Bangoji and Adamu Isa were later arrested in the town of Douala and carried to Bafoussam where they were jointly detained with Usman Haman.⁴⁸ Within this same period, one Musa Bure, a very influential member of the Sabga Fulani family who was accused of having organized the youths in Sabga to carry out the destruction, was shot at in his house in Sabga one early morning by a senior Gendarmerie Officer. Also, the then North West Provincial President of MBOSCUA in the person of Musa Ndamba, was arrested in Bamenda by Gendarmerie captain and commander of the Gendarmerie company of Boyo Division. After two weeks in Gendarmerie detention, MBOSCUA'S lawyer succeeded to release Musa Ndamba on bail through the high court of Boyo judicial division.⁴⁹

While under detention in Bamenda awaiting the determination of their appeal by the North West Court of appeal, Yaouba Umaru escaped from prison custody. The appealed matter continued with the other three convicts. On 23rd March 2004, the North West Provincial court of appeal entered judgement in favour of the three appellants and reversed their conviction and sentence by the Bafoussam military Tribunal. The civil award of the lower court was also set aside. The most interesting part of the court of appeal judgement was the order it made, restraining Alhaji Baba and his agents and assigns from interfering with the piece of parcel of land in question or engaging in any provocative act in relation there to, which is likely to lead to a breach of peace until the administration determines the pending land dispute between the parties. The court went further to state that, it reserved the right to sanction by way of contempt any contravener of its order.⁵⁰

Meanwhile Yaouba Umaru was later arrested in the east region and taken back to Bamenda. The lawyer for MBOSCUA thereafter caused Yaouba's appeal to be re-listed in suit No.BCQ/5C/2004. On the 14th of March 2006, the North West Regional Court of appeal also entered judgement in his favour and reversed his conviction and sentence by the Bafoussam Military Tribunal.⁵¹

The Fulani community in North West Cameroon had been faced with so many Challenges that are some times dreadful. A clear example was the incident that happened in Sabga in 2008 with the death of Lamido Sabga. Two of the late Lamido's sons came claiming to be the rightful successors to the father's throne. They were Ahmadu and Mamuda Sabga,. As the story goes, before the father passed away, he had already designated Ahmadu Sabga to be his rightful successor. By then, Mamuda Sabga was in Buea where he has spent most of his life working. When the father died, he hurriedly returned to Sabga and claimed the throne. The Fulani community in Sabga instead recognized Ahamdu Sabga as the new Lamido of Sabga. Mamuda Sabga then with the help and influence of Alhaji Baba Danpullo forcefully took over the throne. The two seek the support of the administration for Mamuda's recognition and got it. Majority of the Fulani in Sabga then decided not to recognize Mamuda Sabga, as the new Lamido of Sabga.⁵² The Fulani mostly made up of youths rallied up, and stage a serious up rising to chase Mamuda Sabga from the Lamidate, but were suppressed by a heavy gendarmerie deployment solicited by Alhaji Baba from the administration. Many of the Fulani sustained serious injuries during that incident while others lost their lives. The Fulani were forced to accept Mamuda Sabga as the new Lamido of Sabga. Up till now, some Fulani are still agitating against the candidature of Mamuda Sabga.⁵³

Conclusion

Discourses on autochthony, citizenship and exclusion have become popular in Cameroon as well as other parts of Africa, and lately even in Europe. This is the case with the Fulani. The Fulani in North West Cameroon Can thus be located at the intersection of citizenship, clientele and marginality in contemporary Cameroon. The Fulani have not simply been excluded from the local definitions and practices of citizenship, but have been integral to their formation. The role and status of the Fulani as 'resident aliens' is characteristics of the relationship of marginal groups to 'mainstream' notions of citizenship. As the above elaborations have

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Interview with Mallam Mama, 47years, Fulani elite, Bamenda, 30th November 2008.

⁵³ Interview with Alhaji Adamu, 66years, Fulani elder, Bamenda, 20th December 2008.

shown, the national political transformations of the 1990s and the changes in international development policies have largely benefited the Fulani. By successfully claiming regional citizenship and minority status to the Cameroonian state, they have been able to challenge local autochthony discourses. As the Fulani and North westerners are now attributed equal status by the Cameroon government, the regional power balance has changed. While former inequalities have been resolved, a potential for new tensions has emerged. There is an observable tendency among Fulani in the North West to secure access to natural and state resources via legal claims, as an alternative or in addition to cultivating good relations with their North West neighbours. More to that, Fulani have been assisted and encouraged by MBOSCUDA to defy the exploitative practices of state agents. Consequently, integration into the mainstream community society is increasingly negotiated on the level of the state rather than the local or regional community itself.

Farmer-grazier conflicts continue to be a real hazard hampering the full integration of the Fulani into the North West communities. The conflicts seriously contributed to impoverish the two rural communities. Farmer-Grazier conflicts in the West Region are often bloody and costly in terms of damages. Efforts have been carried out by different stake holders to bring the situation under control, but almost all of them have proved futile. This has been as a result of the corrupt nature of the mediators and their non implementation of decision arrived at.

Irrespective of the fact that many Fulani of the younger generation have gradually developed emotional bonds with their home areas, neighbouring groups or the local population have mixed feelings about these development, as they may generate new conflicts. It is about time that the local population as well as the administration of the North West Region refrain themselves from 'Mbororophobia' or 'Fulaniphobia' tendencies, recognized the Fulani as full Cameroonian citizens coming from the same region. The Fulani on their part should fully affirm themselves as indigenes of the North West Region. If the local population and the Fulani accept each other and live in peace, harmony and concord, not only will the North West Region experience greater achievements and developments, but also the Fulani will end up fully integrating themselves into the mainstream societies of the North West Region of Cameroon.

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