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FRIENDSHIPAT DAWN, ENMITYAT DUSK: ANALYZING UNSTABLE FARMER-HERDER RELATIONS IN THE BAMENDA GRASSFIELDS OF CAMEROON

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ABSTRACT
Whereas dealings between sedentary cultivators and nomadic herders in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon are actually a mixed blessing, political literature, academic discourse and media propaganda are replete with concepts that relations between them are characterized by disagreements over the use, management and ownership of scarce resources as well as choice of economic activity. At one moment there is camaraderie between the users as they share public space and utilities like markets, roads, hospitals and schools on a daily basis. Opposition between them takes many forms, ranging from crop damage, cow massacre, daily quarrels, frequent exchange of blows, mob demonstrations and litigation, to the use of mystical powers and conventional weapons. Their initial relationship in the 1940s and 1950s was mutually beneficial, based on peaceful coexistence and characterized by economic and social symbiosis. But about 50 years later, these relations turned sour when the economic interests of both parties over land began to clash.
Keywords: *BamendaGrassfields, Mbororo, symbiosis, patron-client relations, indigenous people*

INTRODUCTION

The Bamenda Grassfields, which corresponds to the North West Region of the Republic of Cameroon is an administrative unit made up of seven divisions and 34 local councils.[i] According to 2005 estimates, the area had 1 730 000 hectares of land, 1 816 500 inhabitants and 1 071 035 cattle. The region is a pasture-rich and tsetse fly-free zone that attracted thousands of cattle because its climate makes trypanosomiasis infection practically non-existent or easy to eliminate. Also, it sustains pasture on the highlands for eight months of the year. But it is also notorious for its perennial conflicts that generate social strife, compromise peaceful coexistence and impoverish the people (Ngwoh, 2014: 63). Throughout human history, relations between farmers and herders have vacillated from one phase to another and are determined by elements like political hegemony, accessibility to resources, production systems, vested interest, allocation of economic privileges and obligations, as well as belief systems (Hussein, 1998: 8). Historiography on this subject shows that Mbororo[ii] herders integrated into the local society by virtue of their economic specialization, and

took part in a system of ethnic division of labour in what Schlee referred to as "integration through difference" (Schlee, 2001: 18.)

The major thrust of this paper is to deconstruct the wrong idea about the permanent hostile relations between these groups and demonstrate the changing phases of such a relationship. Rather than remaining stagnant, dealings transformed from clientelism (patron-client) through synergy (cooperation or symbiosis) to competition and then conflict. The first of the work part sets out not only to analyze how clientelism was established but also to elucidate the forms and methods by which tribute was paid by Mbororo herders to Grassfields chiefs as well as how the clients later challenged the practice. The second section discusses eight ways in which farmer herder synergy was manifested and starts by justifying the *raison d'etre* of this type of relationship. The major preoccupation of section three is to identify the major causes of competition between the groups. The last part of this paper addresses the causes, manifestations and effects of farmer herder conflicts.

PATRON-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FARMERS AND HERDERS

Although it is virtually impossible to provide a suitable timeframe for each of the phases identified above (because they were embedded in their respective historical and regional contexts), it is however, true that from 1919, relations between the homegrown Grassfielders and Mbororo herders were characterized by the absence of an equality of status. While the former played the role of landowners, the latter contented themselves as landholders, thereby giving rise to patron-client relationships. It was customary for strangers to pay a visit to the traditional authority of their host community to announce their mission and seek permission to sojourn. This was considered *conditio sine quo non* for the Mbororo because they were initially perceived as strangers. Since the pre-colonial domestic mode of production was based on subsistence, herders generally engaged in nomadism, which was determined by ecological stability. They exchanged some of their animal products with farmers for grain, thereby supplementing their respective diets. The connections between their economic activities meant that they each had a stake in the well-being of the opposite group (Sinclair and Fryxell, 1985: 989-994). This *status quo* was a common occurrence not only in the study area, but also in pre-colonial West Africa. Their interdependence created 'symbiotic relationships' based on a certain commonality of interests (World Bank, 1994: 4).

The indigenes who had hegemony over the land maintained host-client relations with the Mbororo who, although recognized by the United Nations in 2004 as "indigenous people" or *peuples autochtones*, were initially locally perceived as "strangers" and "migrants" or *peuples allogenes*. They were not indigenes or sons and daughters of the soil because concepts about their status which were centered on ideas of priority in time ("first coming"), emphasized spiritual bonds with the land as well as political supremacy and were used by local actors to substantiate claims to land and power. Since colonial times, the majority population or dominant groups claimed to be autochthonous to exclude more recent immigrants. In Cameroon as a whole, minorities like the Mbororo and Baka were denied the status of autochtones by larger ethnic groups (Pelican, 2007: 58-59).

In the North West Region, Mbororo constitute an ethnic and religious minority accounting for 5 to 10 per cent of the total population (Boutrais, 1995: 548). From a total of about 10 000 in 1955, the number rose to 85 280 in 2005 (MBOSCUDA, 2012). The majority of the region's inhabitants who were largely subsistence farmers organized in centralized chiefdoms and confederations were Grassfielders, belonging to linguistically distinct communities but sharing common features of economic and sociopolitical organization. Researchers have always questioned when and how the Grassfielders acquired hegemony over the land? In a study carried out from 2004 to 2005 it was discovered that land in the area naturally belonged to the people who first settled and colonized it, as spelt out in the Land and Native Rights Ordinance of 1958 (Ngwoh, 2006: 221-222).

Legally, land was also the private property of the individuals who held the deeds in the form of land certificates prescribed by Article Two, Sections a, b, c, d and e of Cameroon land tenure code (Law No. 74/2, 1974). Politically and administratively, all land, whether occupied or unoccupied in the country, was declared by law to be indigenous land under the control of and subject to the disposition of the central administration for the use and common benefit of the homegrown populations (Regional Archives Bamenda, 1946: 8). Since land was under the jurisdiction of administration, it implied therefore that, politically and administratively, it belonged to the state. Economically, it was an asset for any person who wanted to use it as guaranteed in the Preamble of the Constitution of the

Republic of Cameroon that, "every person shall have the right to settle in any place…to use, enjoy and dispose of private property" (Law No. 96/06, 1996).[iii]

The indigenous peoples who had ownership rights over the land were members of the various clans and villages and who, even though they originated from elsewhere, all migrated to the area about the same time. The Mbororo arrived more than a century later, did not conquer the land and so had no natural rights over it. Although the BanyoMbororo raided the Bamenda Grassfields in the later years of the nineteenth century and were potential conquerors, the arrival of the Germans put an end to their raids and conquests. Kaberry painted a clearer picture of Mbororo settlement in the NWR thus:

> When the first German explorer, Zintgraff reached Bamenda in 1889, there was no evidence that any Mbororo were settled in Bamenda…When the British took over in 1916, there were still no Mbororo herds in the division, and it was not until 1920 that a number of Mbororo under Chief Sabga came over from the French side with a large number of cattle. This immigration continued and in 1921, a Mbororo was engaged to collect j*angali*…(Kaberry, 1959: 4-6).

The Mbororo who arrived in the Bamenda Division from 1919 onwards settled in Bafut, Bali, Kom and Nso. As early as 1938, complaints of cattle trespassing, of unattended herds and of inadequate compensation for crop damaged by cattle were recorded in Nso (Ibid). Whereas most of the Tikar chiefdoms in southern Adamawa were subdued by the Mbororo and incorporated into the Lamidates of Banyo and Tibati, those in the Bamenda Grassfields were never subjugated. Their chiefs were independent and had built up small conquest states, the largest of which was Nso. Members of these states were not however, individual owners in the sense that the Fon held the land, but through the *kwifoa*[iv], the people held the Fon (Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 1962). Following tradition, each person was entitled to occupy within the limits of the village as much land as he wanted and where he wanted to do so. The Mbororo therefore acquired the status of immigrants, settlers, or new arrivals with no legitimate claims to or ownership of the land. But by virtue of their economic activities, land was important and essential for their survival. They therefore acquired land use and occupation through local law and custom from the indigenous communities (Regional Archives Bamenda (RAB), 1949: 11).

The Grassfielders treated them as guests on their land and subjects of their rulers. Through the application of their policy of Indirect Rule, the British colonial administration endorsed this system

of accommodation and classified the Mbororo as subordinate to indigenous Grassfields authorities. Subsequently, under the regime of Cameroon's first president, Ahmadou Ahidjo, Mbororo qualified as Cameroonian citizens (Njeuma and Awasom, 1990: 220) but because of their Muslim identity and Mbororo ethnicity, they were subsumed under the cultural category of "northerners." Consequently, those who were born and grew up in the Bamenda Grassfields still counted as strangers to the area, with limited rights to the region's natural and state resources. In this context, the argument of priority in time, that is, of being first comers to a certain area, played a crucial role. Moreover, on the basis of ancestral ties and links with the land's ritual topography, Grassfielders entertained strong religious bonds with their settlement area and deemed themselves "sons and daughters of the soil" and "guardians of the land." In contrast, they viewed the Mbororo as a prime example of a stranger and migrant population (Pelican, 2007: 9). In this regard, there were several examples of conflicts over land in which Grassfielders aggressively accused Mbororo of encroaching on "their ancestral land" (Awasom, 2003: 411).

Notwithstanding, these landowners were generally sympathetic to their clients and supportive of the idea that they should equally benefit from state resources and development programs. Their approach was based on the consideration that many Mbororo families had settled in the area for several decades and significantly contributed to the region's economic development. However, when it came to issues of land, Grassfielders categorically refused granting them the same rights, emphasizing the Mbororo's status as strangers and migrants. (Pelican, 2007: 10).Mbororo settlement in the Bamenda Grassfields would probably not have been successful without facilitation by the British colonial administration (Boutrais, 1995: 84). They supported their influx as a means of diversifying the regional economy and augmenting its tax income. Concurrently, local chiefs welcomed them on their territory, as long as they paid tributes and acknowledged their territorial and political primacy.

British colonial administration was faced with the predicament of implementing its policy of Indirect Rule and, at the same time, protecting the Mbororo against the hostility of Grassfields farmers and exactions by local chiefs. This dilemma resulted in frequently changing policies regarding the pastoral sector and the management of farmer herder relations (Njeuma and Awasom, 1990, 220;

Boutrais, 1995: 115-118). By the late 1920s the Mbororo were subordinated to Native Authorities, namely the local Grassfields chief and palace hierarchy (Awasom, 1984: 218-226; Boutrais, 1995: 89-90). In the 1940s the Mbororo appealed to the British administration for autonomous representation but they were denied a politically independent minority status and were classified as 'strangers' rather than indigenes (Boutrais, 1995: 219). In response, their leaders formed the Mbororo council which, although its existence was never officially acknowledged, effectively acted as an intermediary between their population and administration (Awasom, 1984: 226-241). In 1955, they petitioned a visiting U.N. Mission not only about how they perceived themselves but also proposed solutions to their problems (Njeuma and Awasom, 1988: 465). They stated emphatically that:

> We the 10,000 Mbororo of Bamenda have been residing in Bamenda for nearly forty years and most of the present Mbororo population [have] been born in Bamenda. We are a simple, law-abiding people, whose interest is entirely confined to the welfare of our cattle. The cattle tax we pay represents one half of the total revenue of Bamenda. In spite of this we are considered to be strangers, permitted to remain in Bamenda on sufferance. We have no security of tenure, not even in the compounds we have lived in and the grasslands we have grazed on for nearly forty years. In parts of Bamenda the indigenous people are against even our building houses and planting crops. We ask that we may be treated as part of the community, as inhabitants of Bamenda who make a considerable contribution to the economy of Bamenda; and that we may be made to feel secured in the occupation of our grazing lands and dwelling places (RAB, 1955).

Among other declarations, they reiterated that they fulfilled all conditions for being considered citizens of the region and so for them, a permanent solution boiled down to two issues. First, they demanded freedom of worship as well as usufructry rights and secondly, to be considered as part and parcel of the indigenous population. On the question of land ownership, the UN expert was categorically favourable to their view point by recommending the lease of land to them for it was only when the Mbororo holds his land, backed by a certificate of occupancy, that there would be some incentive for him to improve his grazing. The one holding such leased land would be considered as a settled person and would not be subject to cattle control rules. He would have complete control over the land leased to him and would be subject to no interference by other herders, or the farmers (Njeuma and Awasom, 1988: 468). Under the weight of the various legal instruments analyzed above, it was claimed beyond every reasonable doubt that the Mbororo were

not landowners. Since they were badly in need of land for their economic activities, they were obliged to play the role of clients as the following statement confirms:

> The Mbororo were not treated as full citizens by the colonial administration. Lacking the rights of land ownership that stem from this status, they relied instead on paying 'tribute' to local landowners for grazing rights, a tradition that involved developing patron client links with local chiefs and administrators (Duni, Fon, Hickey and Salihu, 2005: 6).

From the onset, tribute was paid annually by individual herders to traditional leaders in cash and kind. The gifts donated included live animals, kolanuts and dresses. For example, in Kom, Mbororo graziers paid an annual tribute of one cow per family to the Fon (Fisiy, 1995: 43). When a lot of cracks emerged on the fabric of the traditional land tenure system from 1974 when Cameroon's landmark law was endorsed, the Mbororo graziers were persuaded not to pay this tribute and so a valuable source of royal finance was lost.[v]

As a result, Fon Jinabo II of Kom devised a new strategy of selling all unoccupied lands to the Mbororo graziers. The state authorities in the Fundong sub-divisional office served him notice that he would be arrested if he persisted in dabbling in land matters since such palavers were henceforth reserved for the land consultative board chaired by the divisional officer (Fisiy, 1995: 44). When the Mbororo won citizenship rights after Cameroon's political horizon was widened by the 1990 Liberty Laws, they started claiming equality of status with their hitherto landlords. This greatly affected the intensity of their host-client relationship. The payment of tribute ceased in some areas while in those places where traditional authority was still very strong, they paid tribute as a collectivity instead of as individuals. In most cases, Mbororo herders preferred to contribute directly to the coffers of their various village development associations instead of giving money to traditional rulers (FGD, 2012). Another sad aspect of the 1974 law was that since it was declared that all land belonged to the state and that the Divisional Officer (DO) was *chef de terre*, the latter usurped the role of the chief as custodian of land. In this way, tribute was paid by herders to the DO in the form of bribe and not to the chief. In a study carried out in 2005, it was discovered that one DO could acquire as much as 100 heads of cattle in one year (Duni, Fon, Hickey and Salihu, 2005: 7). But this was not in all cases because in the Bali Kumbatfondom, for example where the *fon*'s grip on his herders was still very strong, tribute was still paid in all its totality.

Apart from the payment of tribute, patron-client relations were also manifested in the form of the issuance of certificates of occupancy as well as grazing permits by the hosts to their clients. This institutional framework for permits was laid down by Native Authorities who enacted cattle control orders in 1947 to determine the number of cattle allowed in an area, stipulate the proportion of herdsmen to cattle as well as issue or withdraw grazing and farming permits. In short, these ordinances made rules prohibiting, restricting and regulating the keeping of livestock (RAB, 1946, 20). The rule concerning grazing specified that cattle should be allowed in any area only when owners were in possession of a deed issued by the competent authority. Such an authorization specified the area of activity, grazing duration and stipulated that on expiry, it could either be withdrawn or extended. But in many cases, their owners valued these documents as if they were land certificates.[vi]

Although the Mbororo were initially perceived as strangers or allogenes, they later qualified on the international level as an indigenous people. Whereas no community in Cameroon was legally recognized as such, the national constitution provided for the protection of minorities and the rights of such persons. However, based on the principle of self-identification, they emerged in Cameroon as indigenous peoples because of their cultural lifestyles as well as their marginalization in the development process. Their ways of life differed significantly from those of the dominant society and their survival depended on the acquisition of citizenship rights and natural resources (Tchoumba, 2011: 211). They suffered from discrimination because of being “less developed” and “less advanced” than the other more dominant groups of the society. Thus, Mbororo in particular qualified as an indigenous people, although most of them were no longer nomadic herders but sedentary agro pastoralists. But it was paradoxical that they achieved such a status whereas the Grassfields groups, who in local understanding and parlance were the indigenous, or autochthones of the area, did not. In this situation, international and local interpretations of indigeneity were irreconcilable (Ibid).

PHASE TWO: FARMER HERDER SYNERGY

From the lopsided rapport analyzed above, herders and farmers realized that they could not survive without each other because their daily activities had forged mutually beneficial relations that enabled both communities to preserve their separate culture and physical identities. Herders understood that they could move into hitherto tsetse infested areas because the presence of settled farming communities had reduced infestation (Shettima and Tar, 2008: 170-171). In addition, fields grazed upon in the dry season were manured, indigenous farmers bought milk from herders and Mbororo bought corn, cassava, banana, rice, sugar and other agricultural products (FGD, 2012). A picture of this farmer herder synergy was painted in the following words:

> We used to live like one people: they bought our products like corn and banana while we purchased items from them such as chicken because they had better breeds (Aku fowl). Our sons, daughters and even wives used to supply them labour to till their farms, plant their crops, build their houses and even transport bags of rice, salt and corn to their homes that were far off in the bushes. Sometimes they paddocked their cattle on our farms to make them fertile while we used their draught-oxen to plough our fields. It was difficult to live without them just as they badly needed us (FGD, 2012).

The basis for synergy or symbiosis stems from the fact that many communities of farmers and herders built interdependent relationships through exchange in what was described as synergy or symbiosis. The basis of this long-term relationship was reciprocity, which either party initiated with small gifts of, for example, kola nuts and later more substantive gifts and commodities. Indigenous farmers could give sacks of cassava and maize, while Mbororo gave calves, meat or other gifts in kind. Mbororo women first exchanged milk for vegetables with their Grassfields female friends before they sold the remainder on the local market. Their men entrusted animals to neighbours who took them on transhumance, while the indigenes built wet season huts for their Mbororo friends on their fallow fields (Davidheiser and Luna, 2008, 80-81).

A total of eight manifestations of synergy were identified in the entire region namely grazing of stubble, exchange of gifts, manual work by Grassfielders on Mbororo farms, construction of houses for Mbororo, cattle entrustment, loan of draught animals and cow attendants by Grassfields boys. During the period under consideration (1947 to 2006), most practices were on a rise safe for grazing of stubble that was on a decline. These methods were mutually beneficial cooperative schemes that increased productivity and reduced famine risk or local epidemics for both types of producers

(Davidheiser and Luna, 2008: 80-81). Cattle entrustment usually involved a farmer lending his cattle to a herder, who took care of them in return for being able to keep some or all of the milk and offspring that the cattle produced.

The dung and stubble exchanges took place as Mbororo moved from their wet season pastures to the wetter parts in which subsistence and small-surplus producing peasant farmers had long worked. In dung and stubble exchanges, Mbororo grazed their cattle on fields already harvested, and the manure of the cattle provided fertilization for the farmer (Idrissou, personal communication, 2012). An example of stubble and dung exchanges was in the production of huckleberry in Kedjom Ketingoh (Tubah Sub Division). This system operated thus:

> At the first stage of this system, a fence was tied over a delimited area… Thereafter, cattle was brought to stay in the fence for almost four months. The herdsmen stayed besides the fence in a well-constructed hut. He took the cattle away every day to the uphill slopes and the surrounding valleys in search of pasture. He brought them back to the fence at 6 00 pm. The urine and excreta released by these animals produces the manure on which huckleberry was subsequently cultivated (Makendoh, 2012: 14).

Cattle was brought into fences from November to March. The herder brought them in the evening and took them out in the morning to the hills and valleys. Such cooperation was mutually beneficial because it increased the productivity of all partners involved. Synergy also took the form of sequential use of land by both parties whereby herders' animals grazed crop residue on farmers' fields at the beginning of the dry season when available pasture started declining in the reserves. During the rainy season, the herders moved their animals away from the cultivated zones to high quality forage found in the rangelands to avoid damage to farmers' crops. But a major problem which caused antagonism was that farmers did not want to release the croplands to herders in good time at the onset of the dry season. This delay was caused in part by the planting of late crops of cassava and potato by farmers. The fact that many farmers left the late crops unfenced made them more potential trouble spots for herders.

Land demarcation was initiated in 1941 as one of the ways of facilitating synergy and harmony. The grand aim was to restrict farming and herding, preserve soil fertility and pasture, prevent soil erosion and, above all, avert rows. From every indication, demarcation entailed that specific areas, particularly the hills, ought to be left for cattle while lowland areas were to be left for farming. This

was risky because soil erosion was more likely to occur on the highlands and to aggravate the conflicts.

Therefore, from the point of view of soil conservation, the demarcation of land did not strike at the root of the problem because it did not safeguard agricultural requirements. But this was not simply a matter of giving land in the valleys to women and on the hilltops and upper slopes to cows; it was a matter of good black soil being kept for farms since women needed some valley land and some land on higher slopes for their different crops (Kaberry, 1959: 25). In this regard, demarcation was unworkable as a measure to curb FGCs due to its high cost, time factor and hostility from the indigenous inhabitants who viewed it as a means of permanently alienating their land. Since it was actually a potential source of more conflicts, it was abandoned in favour of mixed farming that was perceived as a better option.

Mixed farming, introduced in 1944, was a symbiotic system of production between crops and cattle that was designed and promoted by the administration to improve relations between groups in the Bamenda Grassfields (Njeuma and Awasom, 1989: 468). The idea behind promoting mixed-farming was that the indigenous people would realize the advantage of farmer-herder land interchange. At the initial stage, this design was very welcome and well suited to the indigenous system of farming whereby communal land was allowed to fallow for about four years so it could regain its fertility. The fact that cattle was left to graze on such land also meant that cow dung added to the fertility of the soil (Gham, personal communication, 2005).

This approach to farming enabled crops to grow on former pasture-land that had been fertilized by cow dung, while cattle throve on a new type of vegetation on the former farmland. In order to cause indigenous farmers to appreciate the advantages of coexisting with Mbororo herders, the government opened mixed farms at Babungo, Oku, Nso and Wum in the 1940s (Njeuma and Awsom, 1989: 469). They were to serve as experimental and demonstration farms to the local people.
After several trials in various parts of the NWR without satisfactory results, the programme was abandoned in the early 1960s mainly because of a feeling of mistrust by the indigenous inhabitants of the Mbororo as well as a lack of interest and experience. Over and above all, “the main

explanation for the failure of the scheme was that the Mbororo way of life had not yet evolved to a more 'sedentarized' system" (Simo, 1997: 387).[vii]

The barbed wire scheme was introduced in the 1950s when the administration realized that there was resistance to mixed farming. This design entailed the construction of cattle proof fences using barbed wire to enclose crops or cattle in order to prevent destruction. This plan that began in the early 1950s went into full force by 1960. According to Simo, it was "proposed by an adult education officer, Elizabeth O'Kelly, who came to Cameroon in 1950" (1997: 386.) Although it was proposed mainly to NAs, government eventually realized that if the Grassfields were properly managed, both users would realize that their interests were complementary and not opposed (Divisional Archives Wum (DAW), 1972: 2.)

PHASE THREE: COMPETITION BETWEEN FARMERS AND HERDERS

Competition in relation to natural resource use refers to antagonism between two or more parties over the ownership, control and use of resources (Hussein, 1998: 8). Likely areas of competition included access to and control over land, seasonal water resources and dry season grazing. It arose because the livelihoods of both groups depended on these resources that were unfortunately in short supply. The major cause of competition was the continuous shrinking resource base provoked by climate change, population increase and poor production systems. Farming methods were backward, strenuous and unproductive because the soil was burnt and ridges were made along the slopes contrary to the teachings and advice of the agricultural department (Ngwoh, 2006: 75). Such bad farming practices resulted in quick soil exhaustion and eventually poor yields. The traditional method of farming prescribed that after four years of cultivation, the farm should be allowed to lie fallow, while a new area was designated for cultivation. For one reason or the other, it usually happened that the place designated was in close vicinity to grazing land (Ngwoh, 2014: 156).

While the farmers remained glued to their archaic and uneconomic methods of operating, herders in their turn carefully avoided the use of modern and improved methods of livestock breeding. They avoided the use of salt ponds, crutches, paddocks and the cultivation of improved pasture like kikuyu and bracheria. Instead, they depended on natural pasture whose seasonal availability left them with only one option: moving to farmlands because overgrazing and erosion had resulted in lack of

pasture (Kum, 1983: 34). Demographic changes in the area also played a preponderant role in provoking competition. The steady increase in human population since the 1920s was a fact always generally ignored in considering the source of antagonism between stakeholders. According to computations from assessment and intelligent reports, the number of people in the Bamenda Grassfields in 1948 was estimated at 301 000 (Kaberry, 1959: 23). Some fifteen years later, it rose to 536 375. The 1976 and 1987 population censuses had 914 912 and 1 237 348 inhabitants respectively. The 2005 General Population Census revealed that the region had 1 816 500 inhabitants (Ngwoh, 2014: 147). The animal population during the same period also evolved *parripassu* both in numbers and variety.

Large-scale cattle rearing was generally non-existent in the Bamenda Grassfields before colonialism the first mention of local cattle was made by Zintgraff for Bafut as well as Summerfield's report in 1913 stating that cattle was apparently few in Bamenda (Kaberry, 1959: 4-6).[viii] In 1924, the cattle population in the area stood at 10,000; in 1934 at 91 000; in 1944 at 91 000 and in 1996, it was 714 023 (Ngwoh, 2014: 148). This spectacular growth rate was attributed to the influx of Mbororo herders with cattle from Adamawa and Nigeria. From the foregone analysis, it is clear that both the human and cattle populations increased about ten times within a period of eighty years. This was exceedingly dangerous because of the pressure they exerted on land. This reduced the amount of available arable land over which farmers and cattle scrambled for survival (Yaro, personal communication, 2006).

The changing interests of farmers and herders equally led to competition not only over land ownership, but also over the distinctive activity into which it should be put. Traditionally, the Mbororo man and his wife had very few possessions and maintained a small family. They had no interest in agricultural activities, preferring to buy their needs from the local people. Their children remained in the bushes to look after the cattle instead of going to school (Waziri, personal communication: 2005). But things changed considerably because by the 1980s and 1990s, the Mbororo, hitherto prone to the nomadic way of life, saw the rationale for permanent settlement. A good number of them owned real estates in the form of personal large expanses of pastoral lands and this seemed to have been a major cause of trouble (Koumpa Issa Commission, 2003: 3-4). In the

past, the indigenous inhabitants occupied themselves with farming and the migrant Mbororo with herding. But this situation evolved with the emergence of a class of indigenous herders and with the Mbororo, equally undertaking diverse farming activities. This change in interests gave birth to economic rivalry because it presented itself as a real point of discord between the two communities. While very few indigenous persons grazed cattle, almost every herder carried out one form or other of farming activities, albeit within the confines of their immediate premises. This seemed to be a new source of worry, particularly as everywhere in the area some members of the local population were overtly and jealously surprised to see the Mbororo selling maize in the market. Yet, and embarrassingly too, the few indigenous herders were objects of perpetual ridicule and disdain by their own folk (Koumpa Issa Commission, 2003: 3-4).

But with time, the interest of one group began to supersede that of another thereby giving rise to conflict. Oppositional relationships developed because of different objectives and interests in the use and ownership of resources leading to farmer herder conflicts.[ix] These were perennial, prolonged and recurrent disagreements or rows between cultivators and pastoralists arising from diverse factors, leading sometimes to affrays with fatalities.

PHASE FOUR: FARMER HERDER CONFLICTS

Although the pervasiveness of conflicts was a result of numerous factors that developed over a long period, there were three principal proximate causes including the introduction of liberal democracy that engendered the revolt of the masses, failure to implement existing legislation and development of new habits by some stakeholders. The introduction of liberal democracy in Cameroon in the 1990s greatly contributed to the outbreak conflicts trends in the area because this liberalism empowered the people with rights that made them to claim that political and economic power belonged to them. By this, they resorted to direct action to fight against exclusion from state resources, inequality of access, neglect and outright oppression. In this way, they expected to make their presence felt, let their faces be seen, enable their voices to be heard and cause their demands to be met in order to better their lives. Notwithstanding, liberal democracy would not have been much of a problem if existing laws were implemented (Ngwoh, 2014: 211-216).

The abysmal failure of state and traditional authorities to execute existing laws contributed to the eruption and escalation of conflicts. For example, Law No. 78/263 of July 3, 1978 to establish the terms and conditions for settling farmer-herder disputes was a piece of good legislation which was hardly put into use. This law established an agro-pastoral commission of ten members in every sub division with specific functions like the allocation of rural areas to agriculture and grazing according to the needs of the inhabitants and demands of development; definition of the terms and conditions for using mixed farming areas as well as exercising permanent control over agricultural and grazing lands with a view to ensuring that farmers and herders respected the boundaries of their respective areas. This law was also put in place to settle farmer-herder disputes and so commission members were expected to determine the period of the year when, given the climatic conditions and crop cycle, farming and breeding could be carried out rotatory basis. These areas were not to be expropriated for private purposes and the farmers and herders could only exercise a right of seasonal use over them. But the various local commissions did not carry out their assignments diligently and so numerous conflicts erupted and could not easily be managed. Unfortunately, the last allocation of farmland to rural areas for agriculture and grazing in the North West Region was done in 1982. Even though these commissions existed in the administrative units, members were more interested in settling conflicts whereas the real issue at stake was that the recurrent conflicts were a result of their non-allocation of rural areas for agriculture and grazing (Fon and Ndamba, 2008: 5-6).

The decree also clearly provided that the finances for the proper functioning of the agro-pastoral commission were to be provided from the budget of the ministry in charge of lands. In practice, no such finances were provided and whenever there was a conflict, the commission members instead asked the parties in question to contribute a prescribed sum of money to facilitate the commission members' visit to the site to assess the nature of the conflict or the value of destruction if any, and the party at fault. There were many instances where only one party in the conflict was capable at the material time to make the financial contribution and obviously, the commission's decision usually favoured such a person. As a result of their high illiteracy rate, financial capability and far off settlements, the Mbororo herders ended up paying more money and cattle wealth in the settlement of farmer-herder disputes. By virtue of their inability to provide such money, indigenous farmers were always disadvantaged as they found themselves on the losing side. Since the Mbororo graziers paid

the piper in most cases, they dictated the tune by adopting a winner-takes-all attitude and the absence of win-win agreements prolonged and magnified the disagreements (Provincial Archives Bamenda (PAB), 1995: 11).

Another factor that provoked the pervasiveness of conflicts and upsurge of new trends is what Ngwoh has explained in a new theory called the Exacerbation of Conflict Theory. According to this assumption, the situation became acute and chronic by virtue of the fact that stakeholders acquired new habits like impunity, intransigence, land grab and individualism. The impunity was bred by the *laisser faire* attitudes of administrative officials due to their alleged acts of bribery and corruption while intransigence was sustained by the 1974 land ordinances that allowed for twists and turns in the country's land tenure system. The situation was worsened by the stakeholders' deviation from the traditional African communitarian value in favour of Western individualism. On their part, conflicts developed animate qualities and generated antigenes whenever new antidotes were applied (Ngwoh, 2014: 320). A case in point was Baba Amadou Danpullo, proprietor of the Elba Ranch that was created in accordance with Land Certificate No. 140/Menchum of December 1, 1989, with a surface area of 4 726 hectares. This was accompanied by a land grant measuring 1 335 hectares allocated to the proprietor for transhumance grazing. Whereas this ranch was confined to Boyo Division, its activities gradually became a thorn in the flesh of land users in three other divisions namely Menchum, Mezam and Ngo Ketunjia divisions. This was through irregular expropriation, encroachment into adjacent arable lands as well as irregular and violent occupation of other grazing areas (The Jani Report, 2003: 2). This led to the wanton destruction of other person's crops by his cattle. In 1995, a provincial commission was set upto evaluate damages to properties belonging to approximately 249 farmers in Kedjom Keku alone. It ruled that Danpullo should pay the sum of 49,161,910 F CFA to the victims and asked that expropriated lands should be returned to the farmers (Ibid: 2). The defendant simply ignored this decision. This ill-fated land grabbing attitude by Danpullo that was allegedly developed with the complicity of state and traditional authorities actually incensed a cross section of the people who depended solely on land for their livelihood. As people were subjected to wanton losses in terms of land and food crops, farmer-grazier conflicts became a matter of life and death.

On the whole, there were numerous ways in which conflicts between farmers and herders manifested themselves. But for the sake of clarity and brevity, this study has identified 36 ways which have been grouped under eight broad categories as Table 1 indicates.

Figure 1:
Typology of Manifestation of Farmer-herder Conflicts

Criminal Acts
Burning of *rugas*
Burning of thatching grass
Cattle theft
Homicide by farmer
Homicide by herder
Poisoning of palm wine
Poisoning of water source
Regicide
Use of firearms by farmer
Use of firearms by herder
Cattle butchering
Matcheting of crops
Physical scuffle

Human Rights Abuses
Arbitrary arrest and detention
Rape of female farmers by herders
Sexual harassment of farmers by herders
Suicide

Mob Action
Confiscation of cattle
Harassment of herders by host youths

Public manifestations
Sit-down strike
Women demonstrations
Verbal exchange
Written/verbal complaints

Indigenous Mysticism
Thunder strikes

Violation of Rules
Blocking of water points
Cattle trespass
Violence on state officials
Destruction of crops
Destruction of farm fence
Framer encroachment into grazing land
Land expropriation
Digging trenches or holes
Trampling of crops by cattle

Military Action
Gendarme/police shooting
Military crackdown

Litigation
Court cases

Source: Ngwoh Venantius Kum, "The Dynamics of Farmer-Herder Conflicts across the Bamenda Grassfields, 1947-2006," Ph D Thesis, University of Buea, 2014, p. 148

From the table, it is understood that all 36 manifestations were premeditated actions. Of this number, 33 of them (89.18 percent) were through direct action in the form of criminal acts, human rights abuses, violation of rules, mob action, women demonstrations and vandalism. This means that such

conflicts were never accidental. This table also makes us to suggest that the people may have resorted to direct action because they were fed up with the way in which farmer-herder relations were managed by traditional and state officials.

According to findings, the study has verified and confirmed that FHCs affected all aspects of life including social security, administration, education, ethnicity, gender, health, human rights, justice, nutrition, peace, politics and progress. In the social domain, there was loss of life, human rights abuses, rural exodus of youth, social insecurity, loss of civic rights and the stockpiling of light arms by farmers and graziers alike for self-defense. The deepening of ethnicity, cultural euthanasia and the aggravation of the land crisis constituted the cultural impact. The political effects included the waning of traditional authority, exposure of human weaknesses of some state officials, the victimization of political leaders as well as the intensification of political rivalry, constraints to national integration, complication of good governance and threats to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The major economic consequences were retarded development, individual impoverishment and loss of government revenue. As has already been noted, even though the people made attempts at raising their standards of living through farming and grazing, they remained impoverished because of FGCs. This impoverishment was reflected in their inability to provide for their basic needs at reasonable levels. The purchasing power of a good number of farmers and herders remained low, making it difficult for them to have adequate health facilities, education, food and housing for themselves and their families. As a result of low incomes, they could not add inputs into their economic activities to raise their standards of living.

CONCLUSION

The preliminary asymmetrical relations between farmers and herders were generated by the notion of hegemony over the land by the indigenous people who settled in the area earlier than the Mbororo herders. Their claims to ancestral lands based on immemorial usage were sanctioned by colonial legislation. This absence of equity was demonstrated in the payment of tribute to indigenous Traditional Rulers in various forms. But a mutually beneficial relationship also emerged with the understanding that both parties needed each other for survival. This synergy (symbiosis and cooperation) was manifested in aspects like mixed farming, dung and stubble exchanges, cattle

entrustment as well as the loan of draught animals. This should have been an ideal situation but for the shrinking resource base caused mainly by ecological and demographic constraints. The result of this was the surfacing of competition over scarce resources exacerbated by unstable political, economic, institutional and socio-cultural factors that gave rise to conflicts. These disputes were brought about by dynamics that had embedded themselves over a *longue duree* into chains of causation.

They were more prevalent during the transhumance period when graziers with their cattle were compelled to move from the hills which had been rendered bare of vegetation by the scorching heat to the valleys where there was still fresh grass. But more often than not, they ran into trouble with the farmers who were still to harvest crops like potatoes, cassava and egussi (Kum, 1983: 35). During the planting season, conflicts were generated mainly by negligence on the part of herders whose animals went accompanied by inefficient *gainako*. Some farmers too often planted crops in isolated farms in grazing areas thereby exposing them to cattle. Conflicts recorded during the harvesting period were due in the main, to willful and capricious acts of both parties based on economic rivalry between the two groups, each with the intention of reducing the productivity of the other.

[i] The administrative name of this area has evolved over the years. From 1916 to 1949, it was called Bamenda Division. In 1949, it became Bamenda Province while in 1972, the name North West Province was adopted and later changed to North West Region in 2008 when this study was on-going.
[ii] Throughout this study, the word Mbororo will be used interchangeably with Fulani and Aku
[iii] This law promulgated the Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon and comprises eight parts and sixty-nine articles.
[iv] *Kwifoa (kwifwe, kwifoyn)*
[v] The country's indigenous authorities did a lot between 1963 and 1974 to obliterate its citizen's claims to land. Decree No. 63-2 gave the signal on June 9, 1963 by invalidating the provisions of the 1958 Land and Indigenous Rights Ordinance that had re-established customary rights over colonial entitlements to land.
[vi] This was a common feature amongst the ignorant herders that caused them to be obstinate. These permits made them to see themselves as title holders.
[vii] Although mixed farming was rejected in the 1960s as unworkable, some farmers resorted to it about 30 years later. By 1999, many farmers and herders in Wum, principally Alhadji Nguni, Mathias Ndong, GodfredIta and John FruNdi had invested a lot of resources in the scheme.[vii] Apart from rearing cattle, these farmers planted crops like maize, cassava, groundnuts, pepper, plantains, beans and potatoes.
[viii] Phyllis M. Kaberry was a British anthropologist who did a lot of field work in the North West Region of Cameroon.
[ix] Different levels of conflict of interest can be identified including those between neighbouring village communities; within farmer or herding groups (i.e between ethnic or socio-economic groups; between individuals or between individuals and a whole village; between villages); between village community and migrants, later setters, urban population or with large scale herdsmen; and finally, disputes over competence, legitimacy and authority between different centers of decision making in local community (e.g between village chiefs, "*chef de terre*", local delegates of the State administration, male household heads, women and younger generations.

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