

FulBe Pastoralists and the Neo-Patrimonial State in the Chad Basin

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I argue in this paper that studies of African pastoral societies should consider the informal politics of the neo-patrimonial state in their analyses of pastoralists' relations with the state, rather than focus on the official laws and policies of an ideal bureaucratic state. To illustrate my argument I examine the role of the neo-patrimonial state in the lives of nomadic FulBe Mare'en pastoralists. I cover pastoral development, access to grazing land and insecurity, situating the analysis within the historical and geographical contexts of the Chad Basin.

Keywords: *FulBe pastoralists, neo-patrimonial state, political organization, insecurity, pastoral development, Cameroon, Chad Basin.*

The dominant image of the African state in the 'pastoralist literature' is that of a state in opposition to nomadic society, sponsor of large-scale technocratic development schemes based on misconceptions of and incompatible with the mobility of pastoral systems that consequently push pastoralists further to the margins (Klute, 1996; Lenhart and Casimir, 2001; Salih, 1990) and other papers in these respective special issues of *Nomadic Peoples* on the topic of nomads and the state, see also, Azarya, 2001; Diallo, 1999; Niamir-Fuller, 1999a). The African state is portrayed as a modern, bureaucratic state with agentive and hegemonic powers that is in irreconcilable conflict with pastoralists. This image of the African state in the pastoralist literature is quite different from the one that emerges in the political science literature (e.g., Bayart, 1993; Chabal and Daloz, 1999; van de Walle, 2001; Young, 2003).

I do not argue here that African states are merely weak and have little impact on nomadic pastoralists. Directly and indirectly, states have drastically altered the lives and livelihoods of nomadic pastoralists in the Chad basin over the last centuries, for example, by reducing grazing lands and providing vaccinations and veterinary care. I am arguing that studies of African pastoral societies should pay more attention to how the state actually 'works' on the ground (see also, Chabal and Daloz, 1999).

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This means that the informal politics of the state's elite and bureaucrats, which feature prominently in the political science literature on the African state, have to be considered more explicitly and systematically in the analyses of pastoralists' relationships with the state.

Analyses in the pastoralist literature on the state have focused on laws and policies of an ideal bureaucratic state rather than on bureaucrats' actions in a neo-patrimonial state. This focus misrepresents the impact of the African state on pastoral societies because it privileges official laws and policies, which are seldom effectively or completely implemented, and because it fails to consider the 'real business' of informal politics. African states do not conform to western models of a bureaucratic state, and studies of pastoralists and the state should consider that in their analyses of the state's impact on African pastoral societies. This also means rethinking the dichotomy between what Meir has labeled the centripetal forces of the state and the centrifugal forces of nomadic pastoralists (Meir, 1988), in which 'states' seek the encapsulation of nomadic pastoralists, while the latter seek to maintain their autonomy (Fratkin, 1997).¹ I will argue that in the context of the neo-patrimonial state in the Chad Basin, nomadic pastoralists actually seek fuller integration in the state, while state agents prefer the opposite.

In this paper I examine pastoralists' relationships with the neo-patrimonial state in the Far North Province of Cameroon and discuss how these affect the lives and livelihoods of nomadic FulBe pastoralists. I focus in particular on the role of the state in pastoral development, insecurity and access to grazing lands. I situate the relationship between state and pastoralists within the historical and geographical context of the Chad Basin, using literature on FulBe pastoralists and the state in northern Cameroon (Abubakar, 1977; Azarya, 1978; Mohammadou, 1976; Mohammadou, 1988; Njeuma, 1989; Seignobos and Iyébi-Mandjek, 2000) and ethnographic data from my own fieldwork in 1994, 1996, 1999, and 2000-1 with nomadic FulBe pastoralists of the Mare'en sub-ethnic group.

NEO-PATRIMONIAL STATES

African states are today generally referred to as neo-patrimonial states in the political science literature (e.g., Chabal and Daloz, 1999; van de Walle, 2001). In the neo-patrimonial state the state is an empty façade as the real business of politics is done informally through clientelistic networks. Through informal politics politicians, bureaucrats and elite instrumentalize the apparent disorder to use the state's public resources for personal enrichment and support for their clients. The African state is labeled *neo*-patrimonial because patrimonial practices coexist with the modern bureaucracy of Weber's legal-rational state. In fact, patrimonial practices can only exist because there is a modern bureaucracy with budgets and laws (van de Walle, 2001). Studying pastoralists' relationships with the neo-patrimonial state

thus requires analysis of both the official bureaucracy and the informal politics of the clientelistic networks that operate within the state. It is critical to avoid treating the abstraction of 'the state' as an autonomous agent and instead focus on the individuals who make up the state, e.g., the political elite, bureaucrats, military and police, and how they implement, manipulate and instrumentalize official policies and laws.

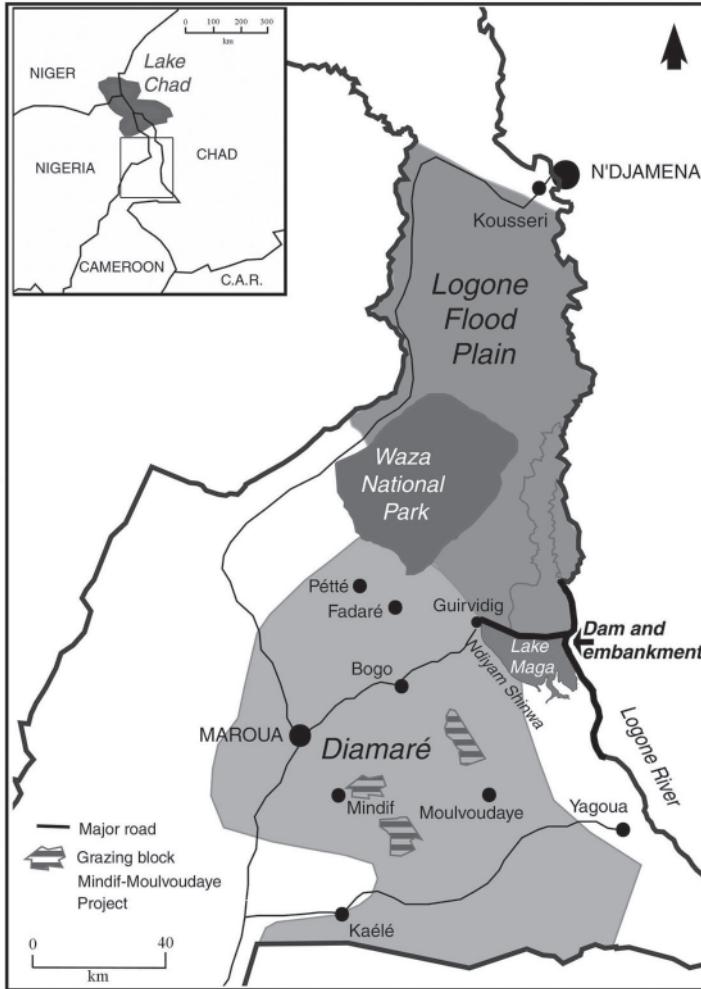
Nomadic FulBe pastoralists' contacts with the Cameroonian state are limited to encounters with lower-level bureaucrats of the agricultural or animal husbandry services, traditional authorities, custom officials, policemen and district chiefs (*sous-préfets*). In most of their dealings with nomadic pastoralists, these agents of the state engage in 'informal politics', using the formal bureaucratic system and its official laws, policies and budgets—e.g., vaccinations, permits for transhumance, transhumance tax, poll tax, identity cards, customs—to seek bribes and prebends from pastoralists. Understanding nomadic pastoralists' relationships with the neo-patrimonial state requires an analytical approach that focuses on actual events and everyday encounters of nomadic pastoralists with these representatives of the state. My analysis will therefore focus on the everyday realities as experienced by pastoralists (see also Chabal and Daloz, 1999).²

THE CHAD BASIN

Examining nomadic pastoralists' relationships with 'the state' does not mean that analysis should be limited to one nation state. African states are colonial inventions with more or less arbitrary boundaries drawn by European colonial powers in the 19th century (see Figure 1). Although borders have had an impact on the lives of pastoralists, it is not productive to limit the focus to pastoralists' relations with only one of these post-colonial states. The transhumance of FulBe Mare'en pastoralists in the Far takes them frequently outside Cameroon and their kin and kith live scattered across Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and the Central African Republic. Consequently they come in contact with representatives of different neo-patrimonial states in the Lake Chad Basin. Moreover, events across the border have a direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of nomadic pastoralists in the Far North (e.g., civil war in Chad, religious unrest in Nigeria). It is thus important to examine pastoralists' relations with the state within a larger regional framework, that of the Chad Basin (Krings and Platte, 2004; Roitman, 2004).³ In many ways, it is better to think of the Chad Basin not as neighboring states, but as the locus of several partially overlapping ecological, cultural, economic and political zones that are crossed by political, economic and criminal transnational networks (Roitman, 2004). An example of such a transnational network is the transit of cattle following ancient trade routes from Sudan and Chad through Cameroon to livestock markets and consumers in Nigeria. The volume of this cattle trade is such that one would not

be able to grasp the pastoral economy and livestock markets in the Far North if one does not consider this east-west trade flow of cattle (Moritz, 2003). Similarly one cannot understand the current insecurity of cattle raids and road bandits in the Far North if one does not consider the political instability elsewhere in the Chad Basin (Issa, 2004).

Figure 1: The Chad Basin and the Far North Province of Cameroon



FulBe pastoralists in the far north of Cameroon

FulBe pastoralists in the Chad Basin are part of the largest ethnic pastoralists group in Africa. There are about 20 million speakers of Fulfulde, who can be found

throughout West Africa from Senegal in the west to Sudan in the east.⁴ FulBe pastoralists have been present in the Chad Basin and the Far North since the eighth century, but the majority of the FulBe came in several waves between the sixteenth and nineteenth century in search of pastures for their cattle (Mohammadou, 1976; Mohammadou, 1988; Seignobos and Iyébi-Mandjek, 2000). The Far North offers excellent grazing opportunities for nomadic pastoralists; the Logone floodplain in particular constitutes one of the most important dry season rangelands in the Chad Basin (Scholte et al., forthcoming; Seignobos and Iyébi-Mandjek, 2000). Pastoralists from Cameroon, Nigeria and Niger trek each November to the Logone floodplain to exploit the excellent quantity and quality of the rangelands accessible when the water retreats. In the 1970s there were approximately 950,000 cattle in the Far North Province, most of them owned by FulBe and Arab agropastoralists. In recent decades cattle numbers have declined to about 600,000 cattle of which about 200,000 go on transhumance to the Logone floodplain (Moritz, 2003). Sedentary agropastoralists own the majority of the cattle in the Far North, although it remains unclear what percentage, in part because they entrust cattle to nomadic pastoralists (Moritz, 2003). Most nomadic pastoralists in the Far North came during the droughts of the early 1970s and 1980s. The sub-ethnic group with the longest residence history, the FulBe Mare'en, came about 60 years ago from Borno, Nigeria. Others came more recently from southeast Niger and Chad.

The FulBe Lesde

When FulBe pastoralists came to the Far North from the periphery of the neighboring Borno Empire, the Hausa states and Baguirmi between the sixteenth and nineteenth century were subject to rule of local chiefs with whom they had to negotiate access to grazing lands (Abubakar, 1977; Mohammadou, 1976; Seignobos and Iyébi-Mandjek, 2000). The conditions under which FulBe pastoralists had gained access to pastures were not always favorable and often they were exploited by the same rulers that had offered them protection in return for tribute and grazing fees (van Raay, 1971). In response FulBe pastoralists either fled or rebelled against what they considered intolerable conditions (Azarya, 1978; Kirk-Greene, 1958). Some of these rebellions escalated into wars towards the end of the eighteenth century (Seignobos and Iyébi-Mandjek 2000). Later FulBe wars in the Far North were waged under the cover of a larger FulBe holy war or jihad that was started in Sokoto in 1804 by sheikh Uthmān dan Fodio.

When the jihad spread east to the Far North of Cameroon it resulted in the establishment of eight FulBe *lesDe*.⁵ The FulBe *lesDe* were highly centralized. At the top of the hierarchy was the *laamiiDo* (plural *laamiiBe*), who governed the territory of his lamidat via his secondary and tertiary chiefs, respectively *lawan'en* and *jawruBe* (singular *lawan*, *jawro*) (see also Azarya, 1978; Njeuma, 1989,12). The political

system of these lesDe can be aptly described as patrimonial (Lacroix, 1953; Njeuma, 1989; Weber, 1964 [1947]). The administration of the lesdi was under direct control of the laamiiDo kin; secondary and tertiary chiefs were generally patrilineal kin, while most council members and soldiers were slaves. The laamiiBe appointed trusted slaves and close kin as lawan'en at the borders of the lesdi to control attacks from Tupuri, Musgum and Mundang. In the lesdi there was no distinction between public and private property; all land was patrimony of the laamiiDo.

Although the FulBe lesDe were established by pastoral clans, they were not nomadic states (Khazanov, 1994); a clear divide developed between the ruling elite and the FulBe who remained nomadic. The ruling elite and many of their followers settled and relied on slaves to cultivate the land and take their herds on transhumance. For FulBe pastoralists the lesDe provided relatively safe and secure access to rangelands (Moritz et al., 2002). However, at the borders of emirates there was a constant war between FulBe and non-subjugated populations of Mundang, Giziga, Tupuri and Musgum. Trade caravans, and FulBe herds and villages were at permanent risk of raids from these groups, which made the border areas unsuitable for pastoralists (Beauvilain, 1989; Issa and Adama, 2000). The majority of the FulBe pastoralists stayed within the limits of the lesDe and did not venture into the no-man's lands or the Logone floodplain because of the risk of cattle raids. Ironically, these so-called no-man's lands (Seignobos and Iyébi-Mandjek, 2000), which were also the former slave raiding areas of the empires of Baguirmi and Borno, are today important transhumance zones because of their historically low population densities.

Nomadic FulBe were incorporated in the FulBe lesDe as separate quarters or villages under the leadership of an *arDo* (nomadic leader, literally, 'the one in front' or 'the first'), with similar rights and duties as sedentary agricultural and agropastoral populations. The laamiiDo adjudicated conflicts within and between nomadic groups. The nomads in turn acknowledged the authority of the laamiiDo and paid tribute and grazing tax (*huDo ceede*, literally grass money). These were collected by the laamiiDo's agents, the *sarkin saanu*, member of the laamiiDo's council in charge of pastoral affairs, and his messenger to the nomads (*ciimaajo*).

Elsewhere we have discussed the incorporation of nomadic pastoralists in the lesDe as a 'contract' between nomads and laamiiBe in which the former paid tax and tribute in exchange for protection of grazing rights and personal safety (Moritz et al., 2002). We argued that this 'contract' had come under pressure when laamiiBe lost power to the state and no longer could uphold their side of contract, leaving nomadic pastoralists without a sedentary ally. Here I would add that this 'contract' was essentially a patron-client arrangement in which nomadic pastoralists were integrated in the lesDe through the patrimonial, clientelistic network of the laamiiDo (see also, Njeuma, 1989). The taxes and tributes were personal income of the laamiiDo, whose personal commitment secured nomad's access to grazing lands and their personal safety. This commitment was not always strong; a number of laamiiBe cooperated with bandits who raided nomadic pastoralist (Issa, 1998) supposedly under his

protection. The integration of nomadic pastoralists in the clientelistic network of the laamiiDo fit well with the political system of nomadic FulBe pastoralists, since nomadic leaders were also patrons whose followers depended on their ability to successfully broker access to grazing land.

It is generally to FulBe pastoralists' advantage to change affiliation and 'follow' an arDo who has established ties with the 'outside world' (Burnham, 1979, 351-2; Dupire, 1970).⁶ In their contacts with the state FulBe Mare'en in the Far North rely on their *arDuBe* (plural of arDo). These arDuBe have no power over their followers but build up a network of clients, the core of which consists of patrilineal (and often matrilineal) kin, by acting as political brokers with the outside world.⁷ The legitimacy of Mare'en leaders depends on their ability to successfully maintain contacts with the traditional and governmental authorities, and secure access to grazing lands and personal safety. Successful leaders have large followings; the followings of unsuccessful ones consist only of (close) kin.⁸

THE COLONIAL STATE

The German colonization of Central Africa from 1893 to 1903 met with resistance from the FulBe lesDe, notably that of Maroua, which were ultimately defeated in 1902 by the overwhelming firepower of the German machine guns (Dominik, 1908). The Germans presented a numerically small administrative and military force and incorporated the laamiiBe in their colonial system of indirect rule. Indirect rule consolidated the power of the FulBe laamiiBe as populations with acephalous political organizations that previously had not been subjugated by the FulBe were put under the authority of the laamiiBe; for example, when the FulBe laamiiBe levied tribute from these populations, the Germans squashed the resulting revolts (Seignobos and Iyébi-Mandjek, 2000; Iyébi-Mandjek and Seignobos, 2000).⁹ During the First World War, the Germans in the Far North were defeated by the French, who continued to use the laamiiBe in their policy of indirect rule, which, from 1917 onwards, was reformulated in *la politique indigène*. Under this policy populations with acephalous political organizations, such as the Mundang, Giziga, Tupuri, Musgum, and Masa, were assigned their own political structure independent of the FulBe laamiiBe, although the latter retained considerable power.

It is important to keep in mind that colonial states in Africa were not ideal bureaucratic states with hegemonic power. Colonial rule was dictatorial with patrimonial tendencies. This was particularly true for administrators in the more remote districts, the so-called *rois de la brousse* (king of the bush), who treated their districts as personal fiefdoms and whose rule was marked by a pragmatism and favoritism, and almost arbitrary use of violence. And while colonialization drastically changed the economy and political system in the Far North, nomadic FulBe's contact with the Europeans was limited, and the laamiiBe continued to be nomads' primary

contacts with the 'state'. However, the relative 'peace' brought by colonialization allowed FulBe pastoralists to move to new grazing lands, and from 1930 onwards they ventured farther into the Logone floodplain and the Masa territory of the middle Logone, even though raids continued at the borders of the lesDe (Seignobos and Iyébi-Mandjek, 2000).

THE REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

Cameroon became an independent republic in January 1960 with Ahmadu Ahidjo, a FulBe (singular of FulBe) from the north, as its first president. During his tenure, Ahidjo attempted to unite the northern Cameroon as a political force versus the culturally and politically fragmented south by emphasizing a common religion: Islam. In practice this meant that mostly FulBe and Muslims were appointed to positions of power. Ahidjo also changed the political system to a one-party system and established a highly bureaucratic and authoritarian regime in which the real business of politics was conducted informally and most important decisions were made by the president and his entourage. In 1982 Ahidjo unexpectedly stepped down and Paul Biya succeeded Ahidjo as president and party leader of the UNC (Union Nationale Camerounaise), which later became the RDPC (Rassemblement Démocratique des Peuples Camerounais). Paul Biya ended Ahidjo's policies promoting 'northern' power and assigned southerners to administrative positions such as governor, préfet, and sous-préfet. This reversal of policy seriously challenged the dominance of the Muslim and FulBe in the north, including that of the laamiiBe. Today, traditional authorities are officially incorporated in administration of the Cameroonian state, but they are subordinate to the district chiefs who are the highest local authority.

In the last decade, Cameroon has gone through a process of decentralization and democratization. At the district level this process involved the introduction of multi-party, municipal elections and the devolution of power and collection of some taxes from the sous-préfet to mayor and municipal council. At the national level, this resulted in the introduction of multi-party elections and greater political freedom, although the regime of Paul Biya continues to maintain tight control of the media and close scrutiny of opposition parties.

At the local level in the Diamaré the most important players are the sous-préfet, the laamiiDo, the mayor and the leaders of political parties, in particular Biya's ruling party the CPDM and the UNDP (Union Nationale pour la Démocratie et le Progress), an opposition party with much popular support in the Far North. In practice these elites cooperate and forge alliances to exploit the public resources of the state for personal gain and that of their clientelistic networks, in what have been called 'hegemonic exchanges' or 'reciprocal assimilation of elites' (Bayart, 1993; Rothchild, 1985). The hegemonic exchanges of the authorities are best illustrated by

the tax collection from nomadic FulBe pastoralists. Traditionally the laamiiBe collected tax and tribute from nomadic pastoralists, which was their personal income. After independence, and especially the change in the presidency in 1982, the laamiiBe lost power to the state and its officials and had to share nomadic tax revenues with the sous-préfet. Even though the grazing tax has now been transformed into an official transhumance and livestock tax, sous-préfets continued to rely on the laamiiBe personal ties with their client nomads. In practice this meant that the laamiiBe's agents continued to be in charge of tax collection in the camps. With the decentralization and redistribution of power to the municipalities, mayors have been included in the 'hegemonic exchanges' and now also share in nomadic tax revenues.

The fact that multiple authorities are receiving a share of the nomadic tax revenues does not mean that nomadic pastoralists now have multiple patrons on whom they can rely for support. Sous-préfets, for example, do not feel committed to nomadic pastoralists in part because they are abruptly promoted, demoted or transferred to different parts of the country. The rapid turn-over of state officials affects their legitimacy (and that of the state) in the eyes of nomadic pastoralists. The legitimacy of the authorities depends in large part on the 'redistribution' in forms of services or security in return for the extraction of fees and taxes. However, each time a state official changes posts and a new official is appointed, nomadic pastoralists have to reinvest in a new patrimonial networks. State officials are thus not reliable patrons for nomadic pastoralists. This is the reason that laamiiBe, who are elected and appointed for life, continue to be more reliable patrons for pastoral nomads, despite the fact that they have lost considerable power.

PASTORAL DEVELOPMENT

The African state has been labeled as weak and without a developmental agenda (van de Walle, 2001). Nevertheless, the 1970s and 1980s were eras of large-scale and far-reaching pastoral development programs (Fratkin, 1997). Most of these technocratic programs, which aimed at economic development and improving range management, were financed and implemented by international development agencies such as the World Bank, USAID and the EU. Political scientists have pointed out that ruling elites in Africa are quick to embrace new development paradigms and programs proposed by bi- and multi-lateral development agencies not because of the development agenda but because they use development aid as a financial resource (e.g., Chabal and Daloz, 1999; van de Walle, 2001). As a result, development aid and structural adjustment, intended to reform and develop the economy of African nations, have generally had the opposite effect as political elites and bureaucrats 'instrumentalize' development aid for investment in their own neo-patrimonial politics and clientelistic networks. Since the ruling elite's interest lies primarily in control of development aid, it is doubtful whether African states would have engaged

in pastoral development programs were it not for the financial input of the donor countries and NGOs.

When we examine pastoral development within the analytical framework of the neo-patrimonial state, the emphasis shifts from an analysis of states' official development programs and ideologies—including erroneous assumptions about inefficiency of extensive pastoralism and pastoralists' aversion of the market economy, and policies to overcome these 'deficiencies' through settlement, taxation and privatization—to an analysis that 'follows the money' and examines who has to gain from these development projects. Such an analytical approach is critical for understanding the evolution of pastoral development projects.

An example of instrumentalization of a pastoral development project by political elites is the Mindif-Moulvoudaye Project, which was funded by USAID and the Cameroonian Government. The Mindif-Moulvoudaye Project was developed in response to droughts of the early 1970s during which a loss of more than 50,000 cattle was reported (Seignobos and Iyébi-Mandjek, 2000). The project's goal was to reform the 'anarchic' pastoral system held responsible for overgrazing by implementing a number of measures, including division of land in grazing blocks, introduction of a rotational grazing system, construction of water catchment basins, clearing of fire-breaks and the cultivation of crops for use as fodder.¹⁰ The project was originally planned for the area of Pétté and Fadaré, but the laamiiDo of Mindif played an important role in getting the project to his lesdi, as it represented an important source of income, not only for those people for whom the project was originally intended, but also for the governmental and traditional authorities in whose territory the project would be located. The project brought numerous jobs, infrastructure, equipment and subsidies, and the elites could use their influence to secure these resources for their clients.

Nomadic pastoralists were invited to participate in the project, but they declined to participate in the rotational grazing system, and were consequently excluded from other project activities (Cleboski, 1985). The laamiiDo of Mindif failed to prevent the project from excluding his nomadic clients from the grazing blocks. Many nomads left the region altogether, as the laamiiDo had probably feared, reducing his income from grazing dues, the loss of which was partially compensated by 'revenues' from the project. In 1985 the Americans withdrew personnel and financial support from the Mindif-Moulvoudaye Project, allegedly because of corruption on the part of Cameroonian counterparts, although the project was also ill-conceived and practically all activities had failed. The project continued to exist marginally for another five years but finally folded due to lack of funds in 1990. Soon after that nomadic pastoralists returned to the area.

In 1994 the French Ministry of Development revived the project using a more participatory and decentralized approach (Reiss, 2000). Local agropastoralists themselves were to decide how the pastures should be managed, although nomadic pastoralists were still not welcome. The French project empowered agropastoralists

to exclude nomads from pastures to which the latter previously had access. In fact, the activities of both development projects encouraged local populations to view the bush no longer as open access but rather as their exclusive territory. However, the new project failed to keep nomadic pastoralists out of the project area, in part because the laamiiDo, local administrators and politicians did not support the nomad's exclusion as the elite had little to gain from this relatively small development project.

Even though large-scale development projects have significantly affected nomadic pastoralists' access to grazing lands, 'the state' behind these projects is not always visible. Let me illustrate this paradox of the invisible but omnipresent state with a story. In March 2001 I gave Abdu, the twenty-two-year-old son of my host, a ride from the weekly livestock market of Mazera, located in the Logone floodplain, to his father's camp further south in Ndiyam Shinwa. Ndiyam Shinwa refers to the reservoir of Lake Maga created by a dam and embankment of the Logone River for the irrigated rice cultivation of SEMRY II (Société d'Expansion et de Modernization de la Riziculture de Yagoua II).¹¹ The dam and embankment drastically changed grazing lands when they were built in 1979; it reduced flooding downstream and flooded areas upstream, where approximately 45,000 hectares of grazing lands were permanently lost to the reservoir and the rice paddies (Loth, 2004; Scholte, et al., forthcoming). But the reservoir also created the new grazing lands of Ndiyam Shinwa at the shores of Lake Maga, which pastoralists exploit by following the retreat of the water (as the lake shrinks in the dry season). Abdu had gone to Mazera to see his friends and attend marriage celebrations. He had walked from his father's camp in Ndiyam Shinwa, about 30 kilometers, following the transhumance routes into the floodplain. On our way back from Mazera, we followed a different route by car along the embankment to Pouss, and from there we took the road along the dam to Guirvidig. Mid-way, in the town of Maga, center of the SEMRY II project, the road crosses the main irrigation canal Mayo Vrick and gives an impressive view of Lake Maga, which at that point is so wide that you cannot see the shores on either side. When we slowed down on top of the dam to take in the view, Abdu was in awe; he had never seen the lake. I was surprised at first; Abdu camped at the shore of this same lake and watered his animals in the lake. How could this be the first time he saw the lake? It took me a minute to realize that the shore's reeds blocked view of the lake and that I myself had also never seen the lake from his father's camp at the lake's shores. It was paradoxical that this project, which is so close and immense and had a far-reaching impact on their access to grazing lands and transhumance patterns, had been invisible to Abdu.¹² The paradox of the pastoralist-state relationships in the greater Chad Basin is that while states have drastically altered the lives and livelihoods of nomadic pastoralists over the last centuries, the state and its projects are also often conspicuously absent in their everyday lives. This is another version of the paradox of the weak but at the same time hegemonic state (Young, 1994) or the lame leviathan (Callaghy, 1984).

Insecurity

Insecurity seems inherent to the neo-patrimonial state, in part because the state is 'weak' and unable to maintain security in the periphery of the bush, but primarily because the state is responsible for creating and exploiting much of the insecurity. This process, in which politicians and government officials engage in illegal and illegitimate activities, has been referred to as the 'criminalization of the state' (Bayart et al., 1999). The criminalization ranges from involvement of national politicians in international drugs trade to the involvement of local police in hold-ups and robberies. The neo-patrimonial state is often the greatest perpetrator of violence in Africa (Chabal and Daloz, 1999). This is likely also the case in the Far North of Cameroon, where, for example, gendarme, police, custom officials and other state agents on duty at road-blocks resort to the threat of violence (and use thereof) to extort civilians. Nomadic pastoralists without papers, but with cattle and cash, are favorite targets of the gendarme.

Nomadic pastoralists are also one of the favorite targets of bandits (or *coupeurs de route* as they are called in northern Cameroon) as their main criminal activity is holding up cars and busses that travel between the main cities of Ngaoundéré, Garoua, Maroua and Kousséri and local livestock markets.¹³ The *coupeurs* are professional bandits from different ethnic groups and nationalities who operate in the rural areas near the borders (Issa 2004). Many are former soldiers or mercenaries that fought in the Chadian civil war and kept their firearms after demobilization of the armed forces. Some bandits are rumored to be off-duty Cameroonian police and gendarme (Issa, 2004).¹⁴ These transnational groups operate throughout the Chad Basin; robbing in one country, hiding in another. Some of the groups are responsible for car-jacking pick-up trucks in the cities destined for Sudan and Niger (or taken apart for the local spare parts market), and many enjoy the cooperation of traditional and governmental authorities and thus operating with almost total impunity.

In 1998, after an expatriate was shot in a car-jacking, the government sent a special unit of the security forces, commonly referred to as the *anti-gang*, to the Far North because of growing insecurity resulting from banditry. The *anti-gang* operated outside the law and summarily executed suspected bandits, ordinary criminals, and lower-ranking traditional authorities who protected them (see also, Amnesty International, 1998). The result was selective impunity since the wealthy and powerful were left alone or allowed to get away. Although the *anti-gang* now has a permanent base in the Far North, insecurity continues, as was evidenced by an increase in the number of armed robberies near livestock markets and hold-ups of nomadic camps in 2001.

Nomadic pastoralists are the most affected by the armed robberies as they live relatively isolated in the bush. Bandits come to the camps and extort pastoralists under the threat of violence. They frequently announce their arrival in advance to ensure that nomadic pastoralists convert cattle into cash. Mare'en that lived in smaller camps further away in the bush near the border with Chad were at the

greatest risk of being robbed. FulBe Mare'en did not report these robberies to the authorities, in part because the threat of retaliation, which was very real, but also because their previous experiences with the police had been disappointing (Moritz 1995; Scholte et al., 1996). In the past FulBe Mare'en have been prosecuted and imprisoned for killing cattle thieves in defense of their herds. But when FulBe Mare'en were killed, police were demanding *carburant* (literally 'gas', a euphemism for bribe) to conduct investigation and pursue the thieves, as they explained that they did not have the means to do their work. It is equally important to note that the police were able to exploit this weakness of the state for personal gain. When cattle thieves were caught, they were quickly released after payment of bribes. They were not the only authorities to exploit pastoralists; the patrons of nomadic pastoralists, the laamiiBe and lawan'en, have been suspected of collaborating with bandits and cattle thieves by hiding them and their loot.

ACCESS TO GRAZING LANDS

Pastoralists' access to grazing lands in the Chad Basin also has to be examined within the framework of neo-patrimonial politics of the state's agents. Again, a focus on official policies and formal policies, however detrimental to pastoralists, does not accurately reflect how pastoralists' access to grazing lands is affected on the ground.

Grazing lands in the Far North are best described as 'annual grazing areas' for mobile pastoralists (Niamir-Fuller, 1999b), i.e., areas used by one or more ethnic groups in which land is not held in common and no action is undertaken against intruders (Casimir, 1992).¹⁵ However, this does not mean that access to grazing lands is regulated by the principle of first-come-first-served, as Casimir suggests (Casimir, 1992). Nomadic pastoralists in the Far North have negotiated access to grazing lands through higher-level institutions, in what we have called the 'nomadic contract' (Moritz et al., 2002). In practice no pastoralists are denied access, as long as they paid their dues to the authorities.¹⁶ LaamiiBe were generally good in protecting the grazing rights of nomadic pastoralists, as they had a clear interest in ensuring that nomads returned to their territories because of the taxes they paid.¹⁷ However, over the last two decades, especially with the introduction of the multi-party democracy and decentralization in the 1990s this arrangement between nomadic FulBe and the laamiiBe has come under pressure, as the latter have gradually lost power, not only to the state and its agents but also to their own subordinates, the lawan'en and jawruBe (Moritz et al., 2002). This has led to greater ambiguity in the tenure situation for nomadic pastoralists in the Diamaré since multiple authorities now claim to 'own' the land.

In the past all lands were owned by the laamiiDo and there was no distinction between public and private lands in the lamidats. Under colonial rule, all the so-called 'vacant and ownerless' lands were considered public lands and administered

by the colonial administration, even though the laamiiBe remained de facto 'owners' of the land. This colonial policy was reaffirmed in the 1974 land reform act, which officially abolished customary tenure systems and introduced individual, state and national lands (Fisiy, 1992; van den Berg, 1997). The allocation of national lands, the 'vacant and ownerless' lands, officially became the prerogative of the district chief, but again, effectively little changed in the way land was allocated (see also, van den Berg, 1997). In recent decades, as the laamiiBe's power diminished, district chiefs, the official 'owners' of the land, are increasingly asserting their authority over national lands. However, the two legal systems continue to co-exist and this has resulted in a situation of apparent institutional ambiguity in land tenure systems, which is exploited by both traditional and governmental authorities.

I have argued elsewhere that land, like other state resources, has to be considered public goods of the state that can be used by the political elites and bureaucrats for personal gain (Moritz, forthcoming-b). One way authorities make national lands productive in the Far North is by exploiting competing interests over natural resources to create, mediate, and perpetuate conflicts over land. Herder-farmer conflicts in particular have proved to be relatively easy to create and exploit by the authorities through informal politicking (Moritz, forthcoming-b). The authorities' 'politics of permanent conflict' are not always transparent (Moritz, forthcoming-b). Outwardly, the authorities appear to adhere to the official judiciary process of the bureaucratic state; they follow a protocol and refer to official laws and policies in their decision-making. Informally, however, they make deals with each other that ensure that herder-farmer conflicts continue and are effectively never resolved. We found, for example, that district chiefs and laamiiBe adjudicate but take no action to enforce their decisions and that consequently conflicts continue and continue to be 'milked' by authorities (Moritz, forthcoming-b; Moritz et al., 2002).

From the point of view of governmental and traditional authorities there is no ambiguity in who has the authority over national lands, as they cooperate and share the spoils of conflict mediation in a reciprocal accommodation of elites. Authorities in the neo-patrimonial state derive their power and income partly from arbitrage between different groups or networks; thus it is in their interest to create or perpetuate conflicts between these groups (see also Berry, 1993). To a certain extent, the leaders of the FulBe Mare'en also participated in the hegemonial exchange among elites. As representatives of nomadic pastoralists, they take cuts from the taxes and tributes that they collect from their followers and transfer to the laamiiBe as part of the nomadic contract.

Herders and farmers coping with the informal politics of the authorities are increasingly frustrated about the 'appetite' of the authorities, in part because the payment of rents no longer guarantees a favorable outcome. The most likely outcome in conflicts over grazing lands and campsites is a status quo, and this puts the parties already in control of the land at an advantage. The 'politics of permanent conflict' thus reaffirm the existing West African pattern that farmers' usufruct rights are more

secure than those of herders (Moritz, forthcoming-b). But it has also increased the costs for farmers, as insecure land tenure requires constant 'investments' in patrimonial networks. Nomadic pastoralists' access to grazing land is thus not threatened by implementation of the state's official laws, but by the informal politics of the state officials on whom nomadic pastoralists rely for access to grazing lands

CONCLUSION

Although most researchers working with pastoral societies in Africa have been confronted with the informal politics of bureaucrats and the elite, and how these affect the lives and livelihoods of pastoralists, they have not yet incorporated this systematically and explicitly in their analytical models. Corruption features frequently in case studies and some analyses but the concept of the neo-patrimonial state has not been integrated in theoretical models that examine pastoralists' relations with the state in Africa.

The literature on pastoralists in Africa has emphasized that state centripetal forces of domination and encapsulation of nomadic pastoralists leads to their increasing marginalization (see Klute, 1996). I have argued that the focus on official laws and policies of an ideal bureaucratic state misrepresents the relationships between nomadic FulBe Mare'en pastoralists and the state in the Chad Basin. My analysis of relationships of nomadic pastoralists with the neo-patrimonial state in the Chad Basin shows that the state is not all powerful and not primarily concerned with the dominance and encapsulation of nomadic pastoralists. More importantly, the focus shifts from the objectives of an abstract bureaucratic 'state' to the interests of the agents that make up the neo-patrimonial state and how they instrumentalize the apparent disorder for personal gain. In this analysis it becomes clear why state agents prefer partial incorporation of nomadic pastoralists in the state. From the agents' perspective it is better if nomadic pastoralists are not registered, do not have identity papers, do not pay taxes, and are not schooled or settled, because it leaves them more easily exploited. The actions of nomadic pastoralists are also not necessarily characterized by centrifugal forces, as they have to gain more from incorporation in the state. In fact, FulBe Mare'en actively seek to be integrated in the neo-patrimonial state through the clientelistic networks of laamiiBe, wealthy absentee owners and governmental officials in order to secure access to grazing lands and ensure their personal safety.

My analysis examines the state as viewed and experienced by nomadic pastoralists. In the eyes of nomadic pastoralists, the state does not manifest itself as an ideal bureaucratic state but as the informal politics and networks of its bureaucrats and elites with whom they come in contact.¹⁸ To understand how the 'state' affects the lives and livelihoods of nomadic pastoralists we must focus on these informal relationships.

NOTES

- 1 Meir (1988) applies the concepts of centripetal and centrifugal forces to examine spatial conflicts between Bedouin nomads and the Israeli state, but the concepts also aptly summarize sociopolitical conflicts between nomads and the state in the 'pastoralists literature'.
- 2 How nomadic pastoralists experience and view the state in Africa is shaped by these everyday encounters with agents of the state. In fact, pastoralists' view of the state probably more accurately describes the reality of the African state than models and conceptions in the pastoralist literature
- 3 Often a distinction is made between the conventional basin (967,000 km²), which comprises the states that border Lake Chad (Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad) and the hydrological basin (2,335,000 km²), often referred to as the greater Chad Basin, which also includes Libya and the Central African Republic.
- 4 In the Far North of Cameroon, they call themselves FulBe, but they are also known under the name Fulani in the Anglophone literature or Peul in the Francophone literature.
- 5 Lamidat is the commonly used French Cameroonian word for the territory governed by the laamiiDo – the FulBe refer to these provinces as lesdi (singular for 'land' or 'territory'; plural: lesDe) (Seignobos and Tourneux, 2002).
- 6 The social organization of nomadic FulBe has been described as a fragmentary lineage system (Dupire, 1970), suggesting greater flexibility than in the ideal model of segmentary lineage systems (Evans-Pritchard, 1940), as FulBe have continuously changed lineage and clan affiliations in response to changes in transhumance patterns (Stenning, 1960). Nomadic FulBe in the Far North of Cameroon are 'organized' by sub-ethnic groups, which consist of multiple clans and lineages that are endogamous. Members of sub-ethnic groups generally follow the same transhumance route and have a number of cultural traits in common, such as dialect, ceremonies, cattle breed and tents (Burnham, 1996). The sub-ethnic groups of the Mare'en FulBe, for example, consists of multiple clans, some of which are descendents of Arab and FulBe groups (e.g., FulBe Kessu'en), while others were sedentary agropastoralists (e.g., FulBe Ngara'en), but they all keep mahogany zebu cattle and live in the same oval-shaped tents.
- 7 Mare'en leaders also act as brokers in economic ties with the outside world. They maintain contacts with 'absentee herd owners' who split their herds and keep part in the village and entrust the remainder nomadic pastoralists. These animals are entrusted to a kaliifa, generally an arDo who in turn entrusts the animals to herders, most often his sons or resident kin (Moritz, 2003; Moritz, forthcoming-a). The kaliifa has the final responsibility over the herd and answers to the absentee owners. Herders have usufruct rights over the animals and receive a monthly salary. Although, there are no direct material benefits for the kaliifa, their position as intermediary allows them to support their kin and maintain

their client network.

- 8 Barfield (1993) has noted that pastoral political organization generally mirrors the complexity and “sophistication of the organization of the neighboring sedentary people with whom they interacted” (p.17). This is also true of nomadic FulBe Mare’en in the Far North of Cameroon whose sociopolitical organization mirrors that of the patron-client networks of the neo-patrimonial state.
- 9 The colonialization of the Chad Basin consolidated the power of some FulBe lesDe and laamiiBe, e.g., Maroua and Mindif, but diminished the power of others, e.g., Binder, which was subjugated and then sub-divided by Germans and French colonial administrations (Mohammadou, 1988).
- 10 These measures would allow pastoralists to stay in the Mindif-Moulvoudaye region throughout the year, instead of going on transhumance to the Logone floodplain or south into Chad. Many pastoralists from the Mindif-Moulvoudaye region did indeed cease to go on transhumance but for different reasons; civil war and insecurity in Chad and cattle theft and insecurity in the Logone floodplain.
- 11 Ndiyam Shinwa literally means ‘Chinese water’ in Fulfulde. Shinwa comes from the French Chinois.
- 12 It’s not that Abdu had not traveled. He has been on transhumance in Cameroon and Chad with his father’s herd. Abdu knew the bush well, and had crossed the Logone River, which forms the border with Chad in the Far North, multiple times.
- 13 The bandits (pasoowo, fasooBe in Fulfulde) are not new phenomenon (Issa, 2004).
- 14 Roitman (2004) argues that in the border regions, non-paid custom agents, military, gendarme and other armed personnel have become douaniers-combattans and that they are accepted as regulatory force in the area (in the absence of the state). This has resulted in combinations of official and non-official taxes, such as le taxe d’entrée and le taxe du coupeur (Roitman, 2004, 20). Roitman (Roitman, 2004) argues that these douaniers-combattans have a certain legitimacy because they do provide security and redistribute wealth—but I’m not sure whether I agree since it remains unclear how much is redistributed and how much security is provided.
- 15 This discussion of rangeland access draws from our paper forthcoming in *Human Ecology* (Scholte, et al. forthcoming) and from a paper forthcoming in the *Canadian Journal of African Studies* (Moritz, forthcoming-b).
- 16 This means that most ‘negotiations’ and coordination occur primarily amongst pastoralists. Niamir (Niamir, 1990) calls this ‘passive coordination’ or ‘choreography’ of movements in which no formal agreements are made between pastoralists but where coordinated movements result from individual decision-making. Galaty (1994) adds that this coordination is a progressive and

continuous process “whereby the movement of herds is effectively rationalized through progressive adjustments made by herding groups in response to the presence and trajectory of one another” (p.187).

- 17 Through their association with the FulBe laamiiBe, FulBe Mare'en were also integrated in the bureaucratic structure of the colonial and post-colonial state. They are, for example, inscribed on the roles of the municipality in the lesdi where they spend the rainy season and pay their poll taxes (rather than in the dry season transhumance area of the Logone flood plain).
- 18 In the eyes of nomadic pastoralists the state also does not manifest itself in the form of development projects, which are correctly associated with expatriates.

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