

# THE DEMISE OF THE NOMADIC CONTRACT: ARRANGEMENTS AND RANGELANDS UNDER PRESSURE IN THE FAR NORTH OF CAMEROON<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

The discussion concerning the access nomadic pastoralists have to rangelands in West Africa has focused primarily on their complementary relations with agricultural populations (Breusers et al.1998; Driel 1999). Descriptions of these relations have emphasised the symbiosis in which both parties benefited, differentiating little between villagers and their chiefs. The last decade, however, has witnessed increasing competition over natural resources (i.e. rangelands) and a growing number of conflicts between nomadic pastoralists and agricultural populations in West Africa (Bassett 1994; Breusers et al.. 1998; Frantz 1975; Gefu 1992). These conflicts seem to have become more violent, frequently ending with killings (Driel 1999; Juul 1993; Marty 1993; Waldie 1990), although Hussein et al. (2000) warned against excessive generalisation, given the poor historic record of conflicts.

In the Far North Province of Cameroon conflicts between nomadic pastoralists and agricultural<sup>2</sup> populations over access to natural resources have, till recently, been resolved without bloodshed. The role of traditional Fulbe authorities herein, as supporters of nomadic interests, was crucial. It was with these Fulbe chiefs or *laamiibe* (singular: *laamiido*) that nomadic pastoralists had long-term social relationships and arrangements over access to rangelands, rather than with the *laamiibe*'s agricultural or fishing subjects. These arrangements, which we refer to as the "nomadic contract", involved a *laamiido*'s protection of access to rangelands and personal safety, in exchange for payment of tribute and taxes by nomadic pastoralists.

In the last decades this nomadic contract has come under pressure. The incorporation and subordination of traditional chiefs in the colonial and postcolonial state has significantly diminished the power of the *laamiibe*. As a result the *laamiibe* can no longer uphold their part of the contract, leaving nomadic pastoralists to fend for themselves in times of increasing competition over natural resources. In this paper, we shall show how the demise of the nomadic contract affects the access of nomadic pastoralists to rangelands and their personal safety

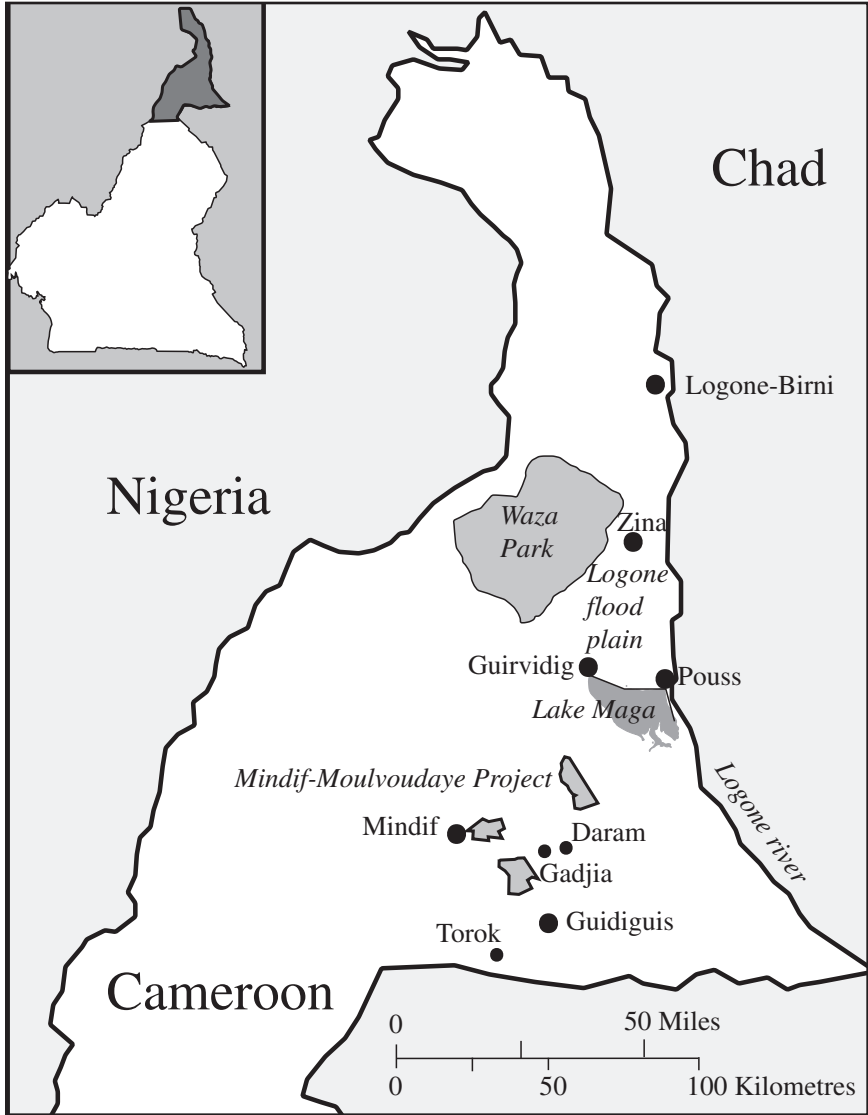


Figure 1: The Far North Province of Cameroon

in the Far North Province of Cameroon (see Fig. 1). As part of our work in the Waza-Logone area from 1993 to 2000, we had intensive contacts with a large portion of nomadic pastoralists and traditional authorities in the Far North Province (see Scholte et al. 1996a). The cases presented here are drawn from a study of relationships between traditional authorities and Fulbe<sup>3</sup> nomadic pastoralists in July and August of 1996.

Nomadic contacts with the outside world have primarily focused on concerns of access to rangelands and security. Access to rangelands is primary for pastoral production, while security has always been an important issue for pastoralists since they can lose their entire livelihood overnight, to theft and raids. In different ecological, demographic and political contexts these issues are resolved in diverse ways. Broadly, one can distinguish three general patterns: In predominantly pastoral areas where different ethnic groups have their own territory, the threats of cattle raids from other pastoral groups are the rule, rather than the exception. In such pastoral contexts, societies are organised in age-sets, in which a special warrior age-set is responsible for the security and defence of the territory (e.g. the Maasai in Kenya). In other areas where the threat of raids and war is not a daily phenomenon, pastoral societies are organised in segmentary lineage systems, which can easily be mobilised to act against external threats (e.g. the Nuer in Sudan). In agropastoral areas where pastoralists live dispersed among agricultural populations, one finds fragmentary lineage systems (Dupire 1970). In such fragmentary lineage systems, daily defence against raids is organised on a camp or minor lineage level, although there is a possibility of organising in maximal lineages (e.g. the Fulbe and the eighteenth and nineteenth century *jihad* in West Africa). Access to rangelands in these agropastoral areas is the result of negotiations with neighbouring agricultural populations, rather than of force.

Relations between pastoralists and traditional authorities in North Cameroon resemble those described by Khazanov (1994) for Central Asia, where the nomadic elite settled and became the rulers of a subjugated sedentary agricultural population, while other clans formed a distinct sub-society of ordinary nomads within the state and with considerably less political power.

In the Far North Province of Cameroon no pure pastoral areas or territories exist any longer, and pastoral and agricultural populations increasingly share the same space. The formerly nomadic Fulbe elite rule over agricultural populations subjugated during the nineteenth century *jihad* s. Nomadic pastoralists, mostly Fulbe, form a sub-society within these Fulbe emirates, also called *lamidats*.<sup>4</sup>

## Historical Background

### The precolonial situation

In the eighteenth century, the first nomadic Fulbe pastoral groups migrated from the west to what is now the Far North province of Cameroon (Mohammadou 1988). This happened in stages, through the gradual displacement of transhumance, and as sudden migrations, in response to intolerable ecological and socio-political circumstances (Abubakar 1977; Mohammadou 1988; Stenning 1960). The Far North was then inhabited by various agricultural groups, such as the Zumaya, Massa, Musgum, Guiziga, Mundang, Tupuri, whose population

densities were low. While there were vast stretches of rangelands to be exploited by Fulbe nomads, especially the yaayre or dry-season pastures of the Logone flood plain, they were under the control of local chiefs, and Fulbe had to request permission to access rangelands in their domains. Requests resulted in serious negotiations over payment of tribute, grazing dues and herding of non-Fulbe cattle. In return, local chiefs would guarantee Fulbe pastoralists the right to graze freely in their domains with guaranteed personal safety. Nomadic Fulbe pastoralists continued to live as a distinct community, although they had to acknowledge the authority of the local chiefs and follow local customs, especially with regard to grazing dues. In some cases, the negotiations went against the Fulbe, who had to abide by demands of the local chiefs, in return for a monopoly of grazing land and protection against theft and molestation (Abubakar 1977). Minor conflicts between agricultural populations and nomadic pastoralists sometimes escalated into violent expulsion of the Fulbe (Mohammadou 1988: 173).

By the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries the nomadic Fulbe population grew substantially, and with the Fulbe spread all over northern Cameroon as far south as the Adamaoua Mountains, they represented a growing numerical force (Njeuma 1989). In 1803, conflicts between Fulbe pastoralists and local chiefs over intolerable conditions that interfered either with pastoralism, the Fulbe moral code (*pulaaku*), or Islam, resulted in Fulbe warfare against these local chiefs. In 1806, the *jihad* of Usman Dan Fodio spread to northern Cameroon (Smith 1966). The subsequent Fulbe holy wars were quite successful, and, supported by the Emirate of Sokoto, Fulbe pastoralists overthrew many local 'pagan' chiefs.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, Fulbe lamidats were established in what is now northern Cameroon during the nineteenth century and incorporated into the Adamawa Emirate with its capital in Yola (Nigeria); Fulbe pastoralists became rulers themselves. Eight Fulbe lamidats (lesDe7) were founded in what is now the Far North Province: Binder, Bogo, Gazawa, Kalfou, Maroua, Mindif, Miskin and Pétté. Together, they formed a contiguous area bordered by the Muslim emirates of the Mandara and Kotoko in the north, and animist chiefdoms of the Masa and Tupuri to the south (Mohammadou 1976, 1988). Many Fulbe pastoralists settled and became agropastoralists, cultivating during the rainy season (or having slaves cultivate for them) and going on transhumance with the herds in the dry season. Others stayed in their settlements and did not transhumance.

The structure of the Fulbe *lamidats* was similar to that of the Muslim Hausa emirates in northern Nigeria, which were modelled after medieval Muslim caliphates and highly centralised and hierarchical (Kintz 1985; Njeuma 1989). At the top of the hierarchy was the *laamiido* who governed the territory of his *lamidat* via his secondary and tertiary chiefs, respectively *lawan'en* and *jawrube*<sup>8</sup>. The *lamidat* was divided up in *lawanats*, which were further subdivided into villages or quarters. The *lawanats* were governed by a Fulbe *lawan* who often belonged to the same clan as the *laamiido*, while villages and quarters were

governed by *jawrubé*, who could be from other ethnic groups. The *laamiïdo* was assisted by a council of wise men (*sarki*), in which the *sarki sanu* was responsible for pastoral matters in the *lamidat*. In addition, a *laamiïdo*'s court consisted of slaves who assisted with different tasks, such as tax collection or policing.

While the Fulbe aristocracy had sedentarised, other Fulbe remained nomadic and formed a sub-society within the *lamidat*. The leaders of these nomadic Fulbe, *ardobe*, were, however, incorporated into the *lamidat* hierarchy and were considered as the *jawrubé*, or village heads of nomadic groups (see also Khazanov 1994: 299-302). The Fulbe *lamidats* in northern Cameroon benefited the nomadic pastoralists in many ways because the new Fulbe rulers wished to ensure their continued support. The *laamiïbe* made life tolerable for the nomadic Fulbe in terms of use and access to grazing resources (cf. Awogbade 1983). Although the Fulbe aristocracy had ceased to be nomads, they preserved their pastoral traditions as part of their cultural heritage and as criteria for status and to distinguish themselves from other ethnic groups (Khazanov 1994: 302). In addition to pastoral traditions, the *laamiïbe* and Fulbe nomads had a language, culture and religion in common and this facilitated negotiation over access to the *lamidats*' rangelands.

## The nomadic contract

The Fulbe *laamiïbe* had thus become the rulers with whom nomadic Fulbe pastoralists negotiated access to, and use of, rangelands. These negotiations led to what we have called the 'nomadic contract', whereby access to rangelands and personal safety were protected by Fulbe *laamiïbe*, in exchange for tax and tributes. The advantages of these contracts were that nomadic Fulbe had legitimate access to the *laamiïbe*'s territories that covered most of the rainy season rangelands in the Far North Province. In addition, since the *laamiïbe* had strong control over their territories, nomadic Fulbe were relatively safe from raiding by other ethnic groups (Issa 1998).

Nomadic Fulbe returned every year at the beginning of the rainy season to the *lamidats*, where they stayed for four months, after which they returned to the dry-season rangelands of the Logone flood plain. In the rainy season, the nomadic groups were considered by the *laamiïbe* as constituting a quarter or small village, under the leadership of an *ardo* (equivalent to *lawan* or *jawro*), implying that they had the same rights and duties as sedentary agricultural and agropastoral populations. The nomads, in turn, regarded and respected the *laamiïdo* as their paramount chief, even though the *laamiïdo* was not a member of their maximal lineage. Furthermore, the *laamiïdo* adjudicated conflicts between and within nomadic groups, and participated in various ceremonies, including marriages and in festivals (such as the *Woclaabe geerewol*), where the *laamiïdo* was fêted and showered with gifts. The *laamiïdo* was part of nomadic society, just as the nomads were part of the *lamidat*.

Every year when nomadic Fulbe returned to the *lamidat* at the beginning of the rainy season, they visited the *laamiido* to announce their presence and pay him respect and tribute, which consisted of cattle and ranged from one animal per herder to several animals per nomadic group. A grazing tax, called *hucdo ceede* (literally 'grass money'), was collected later in the rainy season by the councilman for herders (*sarki sanu*) and a messenger (*ciimaajo*). Each village in the *lamidat* had a permanent messenger to the *laamiido*. Nomadic groups also had their own *ciimaajo* who was also the tax collector. The social relationships between nomads and these tax collectors were good and many became intermediaries for the nomads. The houses of the *ciimaa`en* served as hang-out places for nomadic visitors to markets, to stay overnight, and to let pregnant women stay. Through the payment of taxes, nomadic pastoralists established long-term relationships from father to son, with the *laamiido* and with the tax collectors.

In the dry season, Fulbe nomads made the transhumance to the Logone flood plain (*yaayre*) where they had similar arrangements with the Musgum sultans of Guirvidig and Pouss (see Figure 1) and the Kotoko sultan of Logone Birni (Frechou 1966: 23), although these relationships were not as strong as with the Fulbe *laamiibe*. In some *lamidats*, however, the relations between nomads and the *laamiido* were strained and the *laamiibe* proved to be just as exploitative as their non-Fulbe predecessors. Nomadic Fulbe escaped these conditions by migrating into other areas (Dognin 1981). In general, however, the nomadic contracts were respected and involved a long-term relationship between a *laamiido* and nomadic groups from one generation to the next.

## **The colonial and post-colonial state**

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Germans conquered and colonised Cameroon. Since their administrative and military structures were not strong, the colonisers pursued a policy of indirect rule in which they used the *laamiibe* to control the local populations. This incorporation into the colonial state consolidated the powerful position of the Fulbe *laamiibe*. During the First World War, the French defeated the German troops in Cameroon and became the new colonial power. They introduced a policy of direct rule (*la politique indigène*) in 1917, in which some lower chiefs were placed under the direct control of a French officer. This direct rule thus bypassed the *laamiibe* in some cases, although it did not really affect the position of the *laamiibe* (Van den Berg 1997). Just before the independence of Cameroon in 1960, the *laamiibe* were officially incorporated in the colonial and postcolonial administration and placed directly under the control of the *sous-préfet* (district chief), the lowest authority in the administrative hierarchy. Some *laamiibe* in the Far North Province were able to combine the function of *laamiido* and district chief and thus maintain their powerful position (e.g. the *laamiido* of Mindif until 1973) (Bayart 1979; Beauvilain 1989). These

changes slowly diminished the political power and influence of traditional chiefs in the Far North Province, although they were able to maintain power by participating in the administration and the national political party. In December 1991, the introduction of a multiparty system started a process of democratisation in Cameroon. This process allowed the emancipation of non-Fulbe populations in the Far North through participation in the new political parties, which in turn led to a progressive decline of the *laamiibe*'s position. Even though *laamiibe* participate in national politics through the organisation of traditional chiefs in the capital Yaoundé and membership in the ruling RDPC party, they have lost power at the local level. The decline of power has had a great effect on the nomadic contract between the *laamiibe* and nomadic pastoralists, since the former can no longer uphold their part of the contract.

## Consequences of the Demise of the Nomadic Contract

We shall now present case studies from the Fulbe *lamidats* of Mindif and Guidiguis and the Kotoko sultanate of Logone-Birni, to show how the demise of the nomadic contract leaves nomadic pastoralists in a marginal position with regard to their access to rangelands and their personal security. Changes in levels and uses of taxes and tributes explain the demise of the nomadic contract and will be discussed in the next paragraph.

### Reduced access to rangelands

#### Interference of the state

Originally, the *laamiido*, as holder of the land, decided who could cultivate certain areas and adjudicated in conflicts over land-tenure. However, with the 1974 land tenure law, the postcolonial state introduced private ownership of land and expropriated all land not in apparent use according to the state's criteria.<sup>9</sup> According to Cameroonian law there are two categories of land: that which is in use and that which is not in use (Dairou 1996). Grazing is not regarded as 'land use' by Cameroonian law, and consequently rangelands are labelled '*terres vacantes et sans maître*', which the state can appropriate as it pleases (Marty 1993). This development limited the control of a *laamiido* over his territory and in particular over the rangelands. In the Far North Province the colonial and subsequently Cameroonian State allocated vast rangelands for the establishment of the Waza National Park and the Agro-Pastoral Mindif-Moulvoudaye Project.

The Waza Forest and Hunting Reserve, which was established in 1936, initially tolerated settlements and grazing, although hunting was strictly forbidden (Figure1). However, when the reserve became the Waza National Park in 1968, all

human activities in the park became illegal (Scholte et al. 1999). Waza National Park lies in the territory of the sultan of Logone-Birni, who had little say in the planning or designation of the park and its boundaries. And as the entrance of the park, through which many European and American tourists enter, is far away from Logone-Birni, the sultan accrues no financial benefits from this tourism<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, *zakat* (Islamic tax) from hunting activities have severely decreased, since hunting has been declared illegal in the park (although doubtless the sultan may earn some income from ‘taxes’ on poaching). With grazing also made illegal in the park, nomadic pastoralists lost much of their traditional rangelands. And although nomadic pastoralists are not the primary constituency of the Logone-Birni sultan, his income from grazing tax decreased considerably as well.

When the state allocated land to the Mindif-Moulvoudaye Agro-Pastoral Development Project, the power of the *laamiido* of Mindif also diminished considerably. The project initially seemed to benefit the *laamiido*, but in the end, he turned out to have little control over it. The Mindif-Moulvoudaye Project, a joint effort of USAID and the Cameroonian government, which aimed to intensify livestock and agricultural production and to reverse degradation of the central plains of the Far North Province, began in 1978 (Figure1). The project enabled sedentary Fulbe pastoralists to stay in their villages throughout the dry season through the construction of watering points, the introduction of grazing blocks, and a rotational grazing system. Nomadic pastoralists, however, were excluded from the project’s grazing-blocks, despite protests from the *laamiido* of Mindif (who presumably sought dues from grazing tax), and were thus forced to migrate elsewhere. In 1990, five years after USAID backed out of the Mindif-Moulvoudaye Project because of alleged mismanagement, the project folded due to lack of funds. In 1994, the French Ministry of Development revived the Mindif-Moulvoudaye Project. The approach of the new organisation, *Appui aux associations agro-pastorales de Mindif-Moulvoudaye*, was ‘participatory and decentralized’; local agropastoralists themselves were to decide how the pastures should be managed (Reiss 1999). Nomads, however, were still not welcome. The French project empowered agropastoralists to exclude nomads from pastures to which the latter previously had access. The activities of both development projects have encouraged local populations to view the bush no longer as an open-access area, but rather as their exclusive territory. In 1995, the *laamiido* again sought to secure access to rangelands in his territory for nomadic pastoralists, but without success. This is in large part because the *laamiido* is no longer regarded as in control of the land. Development interventions supported by the Cameroonian state have created a power vacuum in which local agropastoralists regard the rangelands as theirs, instead of the *laamiido*’s, and feel that they can rightfully exclude nomads. Rangelands have thus become communal, instead of common – i.e. community-based, rather than use-based. Moreover, by excluding nomadic pastoralists, even participatory development projects, such as those based on the *gestion de terroirs villageois* approach, have weakened the nomadic contract (Marty 1993; Moritz 1996; Waters-Bayer 1995).



Since the Cameroonian state took over ownership over all uncultivated lands, many subordinate chiefs of the *laamiibe*, the *lawan'en* and *jawrubé*, now determine rights to resources, privileges of settlement and movement, and prerogatives of exclusion. The areas that are further away from the *lamidat's* capital, especially, are no longer under effective control of the *laamiibe*. The *laamiido* of Mindif, for example, is still respected and even feared in the village of Mindif and its immediate surroundings, but further away this is less the case.

### Competition with farmers and fishermen

Rangelands and nomadic campsites are generally located in uninhabited bushy savannah a few miles away from villages, but strategically cleared fields in this zone can easily render entire rangelands useless. In 1996, Tupuri farmers cleared three campsites near the village of Daram for farming, the fertilising layers of cattle dung making nomadic campsites desirable places for cultivation (see Figure 1). Twenty-five nomadic Fulbe households were forced to move, because three Tupuri households occupied their twenty-year-old rainy-season campsite. In addition, they had to be extra careful that their cattle did not return out of habit to the former campsite and cause crop damage that would escalate tensions<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, nomads preferred to move altogether when farmers occupied campsites, in order to avoid problems. These nomad families complained to the Fulbe *lawan* of Daram who seemed sympathetic but did not take any effective action. As it turned out, he was playing both sides in this conflict. The *lawan* had given Tupuri farmers permission to cultivate the campsites, knowing conflicts would result – conflict from which he could profit in his role as ‘adjudicator’. Generally, only the highest chiefs in the traditional hierarchy, such as the *laamiido* or sultan, support nomadic pastoralists, as they are the only ones who profit from their presence via tribute and taxes; while subordinate chiefs, such as the *lawan* of Daram, generally receive only some small gifts from nomadic pastoralists, such as kola nuts, but never cattle, taxes or tribute, and thus have no incentive whatsoever to protect the user-rights of nomadic pastoralists. Because the *laamiido's* protection no longer extends to Daram (Figure 1), nomadic Fulbe complained to government authorities, such as the *sous-préfet*, the veterinarian, and even the governor. But none of these individuals were able to protect rangelands against the incursions of agriculture. Therefore, the *lawan* in Daram could manipulate access to rangelands thanks to the rules being so unclear. Yet, ironically, some scholars have argued that decentralisation and intervention by local authorities is the only chance for pastoralism in the Sahel to survive (Marty 1993).

A similar problem occurred in Logone-Birni, a Kotoko sultanate in the Logone flood plain (Figure 1). The Logone Flood Plain, or *yaayre*, constitutes the major dry-season rangelands for most nomadic pastoralists in the Far North Province. Towards the end of the rainy season when soils are saturated, the Logone River overflows its banks and inundates the flood plain for a period of three months. During this period, fishing is the main activity of the area. Musgum and Kotoko

fishermen earn their annual income in these months. When the water retreats in November–December, nomadic and transhumant pastoralists from Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon enter the flood plain to find fresh green grass for their cattle, while elsewhere it is already yellow and dry (Scholte et al. 1996a,b). Nomadic pastoralists heading north encounter barriers on their transhumance route: fish canals belonging to Kotoko and Musgum fishers. South of the town of Zina (Figure 1), there are about fifty fish canals that connect depressions with the Logomatya River. When the water retreats, fish stranded in these depressions follow the water current to the river via these canals and are captured in nets placed at the end of the canal (Drijver et al. 1995). Unfortunately, this is also the period during which many nomadic pastoralists travel north and find their transhumance route blocked by fish canals running east-west. Cattle crossing these fish canals during this period may inflict severe damage on the canals, destroying the banks and filling them with mud. The consequences are a significant loss of income for the fishermen and potentially violent conflict between them and the nomads. The stakes in these conflicts are high, as fishermen's claims for damage to a fish canal can amount to about US\$800, the cash equivalent of three adult cattle. Many of these claims are settled in the traditional court of Zina by the local chief, a subordinate of the sultan of Logone-Birni. Some nomads suspect that the compensations and fines they pay are a lucrative additional source of income for both the fishermen and the chief of Zina who 'resolves' fisherman-nomad conflicts<sup>12</sup>. Meanwhile, as long as fishermen pay taxes, the chief of Zina will give them permission to dig canals without consideration for nomadic migration routes. Nomads, on the other hand, want the fishermen to leave a passage free along the river, with nets some twenty to fifty metres further away from the river, as used to be the case formerly. For their part, fishermen want the nomadic pastoralists to wait and cross the canals only at the end of the fishing season. So far, there has been no resolution, as the subordinate chief of Zina only profits from the nomadic pastoralists by 'resolving' conflicts, because these nomads pay grazing dues to the sultan of Logone-Birni. The sultan no longer has any control over the chief of Zina and thus can no longer keep his part of the contract with nomadic pastoralists.

Many nomadic Fulbe pastoralists also frequent the rangelands in the *lamidat* of Guidiguis (Figure 1). To avoid conflicts between farmers and pastoralists in his *lamidat*, the *laamiido* designated pastoral and agricultural zones within his territory in 1996. To protect rangeland access for nomadic pastoralists, farmers were forbidden to cultivate fields in the pastoral zone. The zones were designated well before the onset of the rainy season and the arrival of the nomads, and the *laamiido* made his rules and enforcement clear to all villagers. Nevertheless, there was still a Tupuri farmer who cleared his field along the transhumance route on an overnight campsite (*labbaare*). Although he was ordered to leave and nomadic pastoralists were told to ignore the field and not prevent their cattle from entering the field, the farmer remained. The *laamiido* of Guidiguis had to mobilise the *sous-préfet*, the chief of police, and the veterinarian to remove the farmer from the

transhumance route<sup>13</sup>. Thus, although the *laamiido* was still very much committed to the nomadic contract, his policy was boycotted by an individual Tupuri farmer who was supported by members of his ethnic group in political parties and parliament (Juul 1993). To enforce his policy and management of his territory, the *laamiido* had to seek assistance from government authorities.

Now, the *laamiibe* have less power, and subordinate chiefs physically farther away from the *lamidats*' capitals have effectively taken over control. Since these chiefs benefit financially more from local fishermen and farmers than from nomads who pay tribute and tax to the *laamiibe* instead, nomadic access to rangelands is no longer protected. The diminishing power of the Fulbe *laamiibe* and Kotoko sultan has led to a decrease in the areas which nomadic pastoralists can access as rangelands and where their personal safety is still guaranteed. Previously, access to and use of rangelands was secured for them in the contiguous territories of the Fulbe *lamidats* and the Logone-Birni sultanate. Now the nomadic contract is still valid and protected only in patches of territory.

#### Lack of personal security

Protection of nomadic pastoralists against cattle theft and attacks on campsites in the entire *lamidat* was part of the nomadic contract with the *laamiibe*. The Fulbe *lamidats* in northern Cameroon provided security and kept *jihad* pathways open for transhumance and trade from the mid-nineteenth century onwards (Njeuma 1989: 16). However, security is nowadays only provided in the direct surroundings of the *laamiibe*'s capital, and at best the *laamiibe* have only limited control over their territory. According to Scott (1984: 65), the colonial state in Nigeria initially provided security, as the establishment of the British protectorate reduced the political hazards of migration, and thus increased the range of the Fulbe. In northern Cameroon, however, the formation of the state has instead created much greater political insecurity. Interviews with nomadic Fulbe in 1994 made this very clear. We learnt that nomadic pastoralists regarded cattle raids by neighbouring Musgum fishermen and subsequent insecurity to be far more important than rangeland degradation, which was quite severe (Moritz 1995; Scholte et al. 1996a). Cattle thieves had already killed four herders earlier that year and every night herders who followed their cattle feared being killed:

On the first day of fieldwork in a camp of nomadic Fulbe in the Logone flood plain, while taking inventory of the inhabitants, we were told that Bouba, the brother of Hamadou, had died a few months earlier. When Bouba followed his cattle into the night, as he always did, he saw thieves trying to steal them. He wounded one thief with an arrow, but was himself felled and left for dead by the thieves. Later that night his brother Hamadou and another man from the camp found Bouba still alive. He identified the three thieves as neighbouring Musgum fishers, but died soon afterwards. After the burial of Bouba, Hamadou went to the nearest police station to report the violent death of his brother. The policemen

listened to his story but told him that he should bring money, otherwise they could do nothing. They explained that they needed to rent horses to enter the flood plain. As the thieves were known, it was not long before the police caught one of them, but the others had disappeared. Once again, Hamadou had to give the police more money, otherwise they would not prosecute the thief. Despite the fact that Hamadou paid up, there has been no court case, no prosecution, nor further arrests. (Moritz 1995)

This was not exceptional, similar stories circulated in the flood plain, always with the same elements: violence, Musgum cattle thieves, and lack of law enforcement. The few policemen present in the area were not only lax in the prosecution of cattle thieves; in some cases, they even prosecuted Fulbe who defended themselves against thieves. In another Fulbe camp we heard a story about a young herder who defended himself in a nightly attack by cattle thieves, by shooting one of them. Not much later the herder was imprisoned by the police on the accusation of murder. His father had to sell thirty head of cattle to get him out of jail. The thieves, however, were never caught or brought to justice (Moritz 1995). For policemen it was profitable to blackmail the Fulbe, whose assets were more easily accessible than those of the thieves. However, it was not just policemen who ignored the problem of insecurity. Nomadic Fulbe also accused local chiefs, subordinates of the sultan of Logone-Birni, of granting protection to thieves in exchange for stolen animals. There were strong allegations against specific chiefs (Scholte et al. 1996a: 9). The growing corruption of local chiefs and their indifference to the problems of nomadic Fulbe are partly the result of local and national economic crises. The reduced flooding in the Logone Flood Plain in the period from 1979 to 1994 has led to diminished incomes for Musgum and Kotoko fishers and their chiefs<sup>14</sup>. Government reductions of and failure to pay salaries to state employees has increased corruption among policemen and local chiefs, who supplement their unreliable salaries with bribes and extortions. Furthermore, the sultan of Logone-Birni is aware of the fact that some of his subordinate chiefs are protecting cattle thieves, but he feels he no longer has the political power to take action. This situation is not unique to Logone-Birni. Even in Mindif, the *laamiiclo* could no longer provide security against cattle thieves (Dabire 1995: 46). Even though the state has become weak, its influence is profound because of the uncertainty resulting from its lack of control. After legally withdrawing resources from the traditional chiefs, the state is often unable to effectively protect the customary rights and personal safety of nomadic pastoralists, while at the same time the power of the traditional chiefs has been enfeebled by previous interventions of that same state (Van den Breemer and Venema 1995).

The inability of traditional Fulbe chiefs to provide security for nomadic pastoralists is best illustrated by what happened in the lawanat of Torok, situated in the Guidiguis *lamidat* (Figure 1). There, in the middle of the bush and close to the Chadian border, bandits blackmailed a nomadic group and threatened to kill

everybody if they did not pay US\$5,000 within a week. The *lawan* of Torok, who pursued bandits and cattle thieves in his territory, was killed in front of his family by the same bandits he prosecuted. In 1994 and up to 1998, the Cameroonian government did not manage to control this problem and it was only near the Waza National Park and along a few major roads in the country that the government had made an offensive against bandits. The increased car-jacking of expatriate development organisations finally made the Cameroonian government decide to send an anti-gang brigade to the Far North Province in 1999. This paramilitary unit has been quite active and seemingly increased the security in greater parts of the province through summary executions (Dorce 2000). The anti-gang unit has executed both suspected criminals and traditional chiefs who were suspected of protecting them. But in the rainy seasons of 1999 and 2000, all nomadic groups avoided the rangelands of Torok because they were afraid the remaining bandits would retaliate for the anti-gang actions. A vast rangeland area was thus under-utilised, because neither the *laamiibe* nor the Cameroonian government could provide security.

## Taxes and Tributes Changing Hands

As already mentioned, traditionally nomadic Fulbe paid both grazing taxes and tribute to the *laamiibe*, in return for access to rangelands and personal protection. Nowadays, *laamiibe* have to share income from taxes with the mayor and district chief, while tribute from the Fulbe has dwindled.

Each year when nomadic Fulbe returned to the lamidat in the rainy season, every ardo would present himself and his group and pay tribute to the laamiiDo to signal their return to his territory. As they visited, nomadic Fulbe brought gifts, in kind or in cash, usually several head of cattle per camp, to show their respect for the laamiiDo. Nowadays only the *ardobe* who camp in the immediate vicinity of the capital of the lamidat visit the *laamiido* and their tributes have fallen to one bull and some money per camp (Dabire 1995: 50). The annual visit and gifts allude to the past significance of the nomadic contract that has weakened, not only because the *laamiido*'s power has diminished, but also because nomadic Fulbe no longer respect the *laamiido* as much as they did before (Dabire 1995 #76: 46). This is in sharp contrast with the traditional situation when tribute and grazing tax were perceived by nomadic Fulbe as a legitimate part of the nomadic contract, and not as exploitation.

A direct consequence of the colonial state was systematic tax collection, which meant direct competition for the *laamiibe* (Scott 1984; Stenning 1959). The colonial administration even tried to end the grazing tax but without success (Frechou 1966: 23). The postcolonial state was more successful in competing with the traditional chiefs over income from taxes and was able to abolish the grazing tax, for a while at least. Nowadays, nomadic pastoralists pay three different taxes

to three different authorities. First, they still pay some sort of grazing dues to the *laamiibe*. In addition, they pay a poll tax (*impôts*) to the municipality and its mayor and a cattle tax to the Cameroonian administration in the persona of the *sous-préfet*. At one point, nomadic pastoralists inscribed themselves in municipalities in order to pay the poll tax and receive evidence of this (*papier des impôts*) to avoid harassment by policemen along the transhumance route. Nomadic pastoralists did not necessarily inscribe themselves in the municipality of the *lamidat* where they spend the rainy season. For example the *Adanko`en*, a maximal lineage of nomadic Fulbe, pay their poll tax in the municipalities of Kalfou and Yagoua, places nowhere near their rainy-season or dry-season rangelands, but where they happen to have strong ties with an intermediary. These three taxes are generally collected simultaneously by a party consisting of government and municipal employees and the *laamiido`*s representatives. Together they visit the camps of nomadic pastoralists and stay overnight to discuss or bargain the next day over the total amount of taxes that the nomads owe them. The three taxes are bargained as a whole. As a result, the total amount of taxes is not fixed and all parties are able to take a profit. The rationale given by the collectors for bargaining over the amount of taxes is that Fulbe pastoralists do not like their cattle to be counted. More important is that nomadic pastoralists do not like to pay taxes, and bargaining decreases the amount of taxes, which would be higher if cattle were to be counted. Since the amount of taxes is not fixed, the collectors can also profit by taking their 'share' – nobody in the administration knows the number of cattle anyway. The *sous-préfet*, mayor and *laamiido* can always blame the 'superstitious' nomads who did not want their cattle to be counted.<sup>15</sup>

Currently there are too many collectors who are not particularly concerned with the security of nomadic pastoralists. This situation is not particularly satisfactory for either party in the nomadic contract. The amount of grazing tax for the *laamiibe* has decreased over the last decades, while its payment has become like a collection of money without the moral ties of the nomadic contract. An illustration is the recent reimplementation of the grazing tax by the *laamiido* of Mindif, levying of which had been prohibited by the Cameroonian government. The *laamiido* now also takes grazing tax from nomadic pastoralists who never visited his court and with whom he has no social relationship. One of these nomads argued that at least now the *laamiido* knows that they are in his territory through the payment of the grazing tax.

The fact that nomadic pastoralists only pay taxes and tributes to the central traditional authority of the *laamiido* and not to his subordinate chiefs, the *lawan`en* and *jawrobe*, and the diminishing power of the *laamiido* leads to a demise of the nomadic contract in areas that are further away from the centre of power. In Kobo, a *lawanat* of Mindif, the Fulbe *lawan* explicitly told three farmers to cultivate on the campsite of nomadic pastoralists. When the *ardo* of this nomadic group complained to the *lawan* the following rainy season, he was told

that in the twenty years that he had camped in the Kobo *lawanat*, he never paid the *lawan* a visit or paid him any tribute. The *lawan* would at least receive *zakat* (10 percent of the harvest) from the farmers who were now occupying the campsite.

## Conclusions and Perspectives

Formerly, the nomadic contracts in the Far North of Cameroon were viable, balanced arrangements between a *laamiido* and nomadic Fulbe. These traditional authorities catered to the tenurial needs of nomadic pastoralists and were important for the personal safety of nomadic pastoralists and their access to rangelands – something that the Cameroonian state has yet to manage successfully.

But the reliance of the nomads on just a few powerful allies also rendered them vulnerable. The incorporation of *laamiibe* in the colonial and postcolonial administrations resulted in their loss of power. Now that they wield little power, the nomadic contract is hardly viable, leaving nomads without allies in a sedentary-biased world.

The cases described above show that much has changed for the worse for nomadic pastoralists. There is increasing pressure on the rangelands, campsites and transhumance routes traditionally used by nomadic pastoralists. Today these herders remain without recourse when their customary rights are violated. The *laamiibe* do not have sufficient power to protect them, and the Cameroonian state only takes their money, providing them with little security or protection in return.

With the demise of the nomadic contract, there is no authority or law to protect pastoralists' access to rangelands. A new legal framework and management structure is thus required to protect the access of pastoralists to rangelands, enabling nomads to continue responding to changing conditions. This is an urgent problem, since population growth and subsequent agricultural expansion will only increase the pressure on the existing rangelands (Moritz and Kari 2000). Various authors (e.g. Breman and de Wit 1983) have shown that mobility greatly increases pastoral production, making this a matter of interest not just for pastoralists, but for all concerned.

Activities undertaken by the Waza-Logone Project may serve as a model for a management plan on a provincial or higher level. The Waza-Logone Project has been successful in designating pastoral and agricultural zones and a transhumance entry route into the Logone flood plain (Kari and Scholte 2000). The Project motivated and organised pastoralists, agriculturalists and local authorities to designate, mark and protect through consensus transhumance routes, overnight campsites and pastoral zones. These activities were limited, however, to a bottleneck in the pastoral infrastructure of the province, the entrance to the Logone flood plain just north of Guirvidig. To support a sustainable pastoral economy, the state needs to designate zones and transhumance routes beyond the local level that

incorporate the entire Far North Province. In addition, the state and traditional authorities should increase security to stimulate an efficient use of natural resources. Insecurity in some areas (e.g. Guidiguis) is currently increasing pressure on resources in other areas (e.g. Kolara). A major underlying problem of pastoral development in the Far North Province, and the development of the entire Cameroonian nation, is the present level of corruption that will affect the implementation of such a plan.

## Notes

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2. Although fishery is a major activity of many 'agricultural' populations in Far North Cameroon, for reasons of simplicity we shall deal with this here.
3. This study focused on Fulbe pastoralists. Arab Choa pastoralists, numerically less important, resemble them in many aspects, but have not been studied in detail, see also Braukamper (1996) and Scholte et al (1996a).
4. *Lamidat* is a term coined by the French.
5. *Pulaaku*, literally 'how to behave as a Fullo' can be considered to denote Fulbe culture and tradition in their entirety (i.e. the social and moral codes, emotional attachment to cattle, etc.), and distinguish Fulbe from other people.
6. Some authors have doubted the religious character of the Fulani wars . Mohammadou's historical accounts (1988) seem to support these doubt.
7. In Fulfulde, the language of the Fulbe, the *lamidat* is referred to as *lesdi*, as in *lesdi Mindif* (literally: Mindif land).
8. Singular: *lawan, jawro*. The title *Lawan* seems to be unique to northern Cameroon.
9. The law 74-1 of 06/07/1974.
10. The traditional chief of Waza, a subordinate of the Sultan, does, however, benefit to some extent from the existence of the park.
11. Cattle are creatures of habit and always return to the camp (Bonfiglioli 1988: 238); this is one of the reasons for the many conflicts over crop damage by cattle between herders and farmers who cultivate on their campsites.
12. This suspicion is so strong that some nomads have suggested that three fish canals have been dug, not to catch fish, but to 'catch money'.
13. The *laamiifo* of Guidiguis paid for all the transport costs of the visit.
14. Activities from the Waza-Logone Project (IUCN) have rehabilitated inundation in a pilot zone of the flood plain, such that since 1994 the income of fishers has risen once again, albeit not to its former level (see Scholte et al. 1996b).
15. The negotiations over taxes, in particular over the grazing tax, also have an impact on access to grazing resources. Newcomers have to pay three times as much as regular users, while herders who have used these resources for more than fifty years are exempted entirely .



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## Résumé

*La fin du contrat nomade: accords et pâturages sous contrainte dans l'extrême nord du Cameroun*

Dans l'Extrême Nord du Cameroun les éleveurs nomades avaient, traditionnellement, conclu des accords avec les chefs sédentaires peuls qui leur assuraient la protection de leur sécurité personnelle et un accès aux pâturages en échange du paiement d'un tribut et d'impôts. L'incorporation des chefs peuls dans l'état colonial et post-colonial a diminué considérablement leur puissance et a sévèrement affecté l'accès aux pâturages et la sécurité personnelle des éleveurs nomades.

## Resumen

*El fin del contrato nómada: Arreglos tradicionales y tierras de pastoreo bajo presión en el norte extremo de Camerún*

En el norte extremo de Camerún los pastores nómades tenían arreglos tradicionales con los jefes sedentarios Fulani. Los Fulani proporcionaban protección para el acceso a las tierras de pastoreo y la seguridad personal a cambio

del pago de tributos y de impuestos. La incorporación de los Fulani al Estado colonial y post-colonial disminuyó notablemente el poder de los pastores nómadas. Restringió su acceso a tierras de pastoreo y tuvo un impacto fuerte sobre su seguridad personal.

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