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Land-Use Conflicts between Settler Farmers and Nomadic Fulani Herdsmen in the Kwahu North District, Ghana

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Abstract

This paper examines violent confrontations between crop farming communities and nomadic Fulani herdsmen in the Kwahu North District of Ghana. The farmer-herder conflicts in the district escalated in 2010 with grave consequences for peaceful co-existence. Based on fieldwork conducted in December 2010, it is argued that the unending 'war' between settler crop farmers and nomadic herdsmen is primarily a struggle over access to land resources and an exercise of indigenous power over local lands and assertion of identity. The paper explores how the quest for and struggle over land has taken subtle nuances. A *win-win* strategy rather than a *win-lose* strategy is proposed for the preventing of violent farmer-herder conflicts.

Keywords: Conflict, Fulani, Nomads, Herdsmen, Kwahu North, Crop Farmers, land-use.

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Conflits liés à l'utilisation des terrains opposant les colons et les bergers nomades Fulani dans le district de Kwahu North au Ghana

Résumé

Cet article étudie les affrontements violents entre les communautés cultivant des productions et les bergers nomades Fulani dans le district de Kwahu North au Ghana. Le conflit entre les fermiers et les bergers dans ledit district a été provoqué en 2010 avec de graves conséquences pour la coexistence pacifique. Tout en basant le présent article sur un travail de terrain réalisé dans ce district en décembre 2010, je tiens à dire que la guerre qui se perpétue éternellement entre les fermiers et les bergers nomades est fondamentalement une lutte pour

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l'accès aux ressources foncières et pour l'exercice d'un contrôle indigène sur les terrains locaux – l'identité communautaire. Plus particulièrement, cet article explore dans quelle mesure la quête et la lutte pour le terrain jouent un rôle subtil et central dans les conflits entre les fermiers et les bergers nomades Fulani dans ledit district. Cet article propose une stratégie gagnant-gagnant plutôt qu'une stratégie gagnant-perdant dans la lutte contre les conflits violents entre les fermiers et les bergers nomades Fulani.

Introduction

Farmer-herder conflicts abound in Africa and have resulted in a number of fatalities, injuries and long-term human insecurity (Tarhule 2002). In West Africa, pastoralists have since the beginning of the 20th century engaged in seasonal north-south "transhumance treks between dry and rainy season pastures" (Bassett 1998: 461; see also Stenning 1959 and Ekwensi 1990), thus exposing themselves to both opportunities and challenges (Tonah 2002). Here, farmer-herder conflicts have been recorded in the Bisa Fields of Burkina Faso (Oksen 2001), in northern Ivory Coast (Bassett 1988), rural Nigeria (Penrose et al. 2005), and Ivory Coast (Stock 2013), among others.

Conflicts between crop farmers[1] and cattle farmers are commonplace especially in rural Ghana. Significantly, crop farmers populate most Ghanaian rural communities. These farmers have had confrontations with their counterparts who rear livestock such as sheep, goat and cattle. Until recently, however, this phenomenon had not attracted nationwide attention. But what could bring these two types of farmers into violent conflicts? The underlying factor, as shall be discussed later, has remained the competition for land; that is, the *land question*. Available evidence indicates that the problem in our present case study is one of land-use; and not necessarily that of landownership as experienced in other countries.[2] Who uses land at the expense of the other? Or who should have which part and kind of land for production? Answers to these

[1] For the purposes of this paper, the term 'farmer' refers to 'crop farmers'.
[2] A typical example of this situation is what has been established in the northwestern region of Cameroon (see Sone 2012).

questions get more complicated, complex and confusing when the *alien factor* is introduced. This *alien factor* that asserts indigenes' access to and power over land has been a destructive factor in farming communities of the West African sub-region because crop farming has in many respects remained mainly the preserve of indigenes, as cattle rearing has for many years been dominated by 'aliens' (Waters-Bayer & Bayer 1994).

Conflict is here understood to be "an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving the goals" (Wilmot and Hocker 1998: 34). Farmers expectedly want to grow crops while herdsmen's interest is to feed their animals; both parties need land to achieve their goals (particularly, lands that are closer to water sources such as along river banks); and both perceive each other as obstacles against expected higher yields.

This paper examines the 2010 violent confrontations between settler farmers and their communities, on the one hand, and nomadic Fulani herdsmen, on the other, in Ghanaian local communities. It is the product of a qualitative study based on interviews carried out in 2010 involving 13 Fulani nomadic herdsmen and 15 settler farmers in conflict prone areas in the Kwahu North District[3] such as Mim Kyemfere, Bruben, Battor and Forifori. It argues that the unending 'war' between farmers and nomadic herdsmen is primarily a struggle for access to land and an exercise of indigenous powers over local lands – an expression of communal identities. It explores how the quest for and struggle over land has taken subtle turns. In this regard, it departs radically from Tonah's (2002 & 2006) emphasis on crop destruction as the main cause of farmer-herder conflicts in Atebubu and neighbouring districts in Ghana's Volta basin. The paper, finally, suggests a way forward in dealing with what is now known as *The Fulani Menace* in the Ghanaian media and development discourse. It, however, does

[3] The Kwahu North District (KND) has since 2012 been divided into the Kwahu Afram Plains North District and the Kwahu Afram Plains South District, with Donkorkrom and Tease as the respective district capitals. The Kwahu Afram Plains South District was inaugurated, simultaneously as the other new 45 districts on 28th June, 2012. Today, the total number of districts (local government units) in Ghana is 216.

not address historical accounts of the presence and spread of Fulani across Ghana as these have been adequately addressed in the literature (see for example Abdulai 2004; Abdulai and Tonah 2009; Oppong 2002; Tonah 2002 & 2006). It rather addresses the immediate causes of conflicts between Fulani nomads and settler farmers.

The 'Land-theory' of Conflict

In the literature, conflict is often portrayed as an ever-present phenomenon and occurs between nations, groups, within families and in relationships (Wilmot and Hocker 1998). It is a necessary product of human interaction whose potential negative impact reaches far beyond the principal actors. Expectedly, increased interaction between pastoralists and farmers has resulted in conflicts, as the former engaged in seasonal north-south transhumance treks between dry and rainy season pastures (Tonah 2002). Different causes have been given to farmer-herder conflicts in the literature. This paper corroborates the argument that the major cause of farmer-herder conflicts is access to land and its resources such as water (see Bassett 1988; OECD 2013; Penrose et al. 2005; Stock 2013; Tarhule 2002; Waters-Bayer & Bayer 1994). Other causes of such as destruction of crops have also been cited in the literature (see Tonah 2002 & 2006; Oksen 2001) but are, in our view, peripheral to the core issue in any expressed struggle within herder-farmer relations.

Until recently, economic growth has been the main focus of many development paradigms in both rural and urban communities of developing countries. It has been argued that guaranteeing the economic growth of local communities will guarantee the overall development of these communities. This thought rather placed what may be called 'unlimited' emphasis on strategies for rural economic development. Today, even as the understanding of development widens to address issues of rights and wellbeing, the role of economic growth in sustaining development is still very compelling.

At the centre of economic growth especially in rural communities has always been the *land question*. In rural communities, land is the final resort of most individuals for survival because of their dependence on agriculture, which almost entirely caters for rural incomes and livelihoods. As a result, land becomes an indispensable factor of production that easily breeds conflicts between individuals and groups, more than all other factors because of its uniqueness as a valuable immovable resource with limited supply (USAID 2005; Zwan 2010). It is thus a reference point for individual and/or group identity and power articulation especially when perceived under the 'ethnic' lens. According to Zwan (2010: 10), it is "not only power in the economic sense of representing wealth but also the power to grant access to land" that individuals and groups compete for in order to secure their survival.

Consequently, this *land question* has been the subject of peace and conflict, cooperation and non-cooperation, and progress and retrogression in rural African communities and developing economies worldwide. Land-induced conflicts derive their spirits from the very nature of land and its use in communities. Competition for land and the pressure generated therefrom generally result in latent or violent conflicts in local communities (Livingstone 2008; Sone 2012; Zwan 2010). This is because "competition over access and rights to land is often, quintessentially, about power, both socioeconomic and political" (Zwan 2010: 10). This theoretical and conceptual linkage between *land* and *conflict* is made even clearer by Guma Kunda Komey, who concludes that,

> The centrality of land factor in conflicts stems from the fact that rights to land are intimately tied to membership in specific communities, ranging from a nuclear or extended family, clan, or ethnic group to the nation-state ... At these various levels of social identities and organizations, people seek land as collective rights not just as material satisfaction but also as source of power, wealth, and meaning. Therefore, control over land has been and is still used as a means of defining and/or constructing/deconstructing identities and belongings as well as an instrument to control, and a source of, economic wealth and political power. For these reasons, nothing evokes deeper passions

> or gives rise to more bloodshed than do disagreements about territory, boundaries, or access to land resources (Komey 2009: 2).

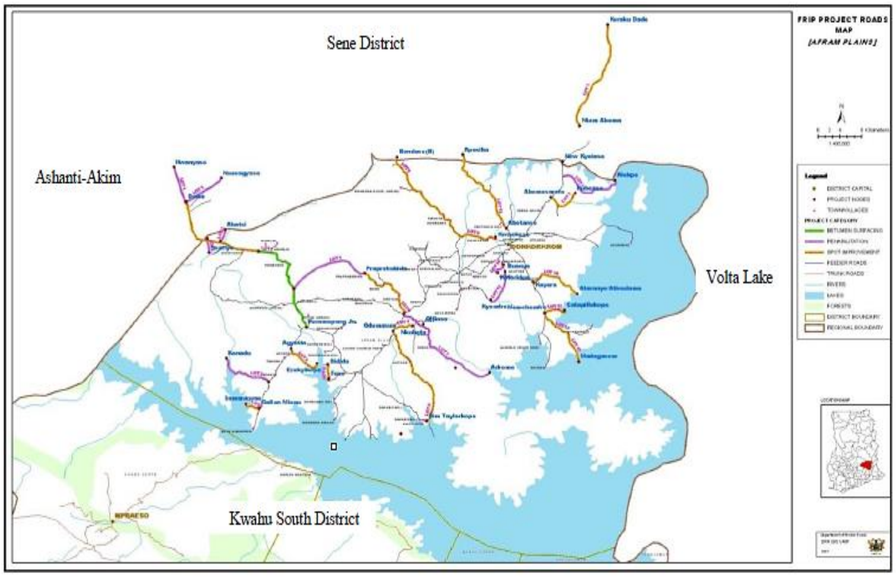
Komey's argument provides a frame for analysing how competition for land resources for agricultural purposes can serve as a breeding ground for conflicts among users. Evidence from different kinds of conflicts[4] today provides empirical proof for a positive correlation between competition for land and conflict in many parts of the world and on the African continent. Thus, *pari passu*, it is to be expected that land-use for agriculture purposes at rural levels would serve as a breeding ground for conflicts among users.

Kwahu North District and Fulani Nomadism

As the largest District in the Eastern Region geographically, and located in the northern-most part of the region, the Kwahu North District (NKD) (also known as the Afram Plains) covers an area of 5,040 square kilometres. Its capital is Donkokrom. It shares common boundaries with the Kwahu South District in the south, the Sekyere-East and Asante-Akim Districts (both in the Ashanti Region) in the west, and Sene and Atebubu Districts (both in the Brong Ahafo Region) in the north. The Volta River lies to the east. It is thus strategically located (linked to five (5) other districts) to facilitate movements of goods and people into and out of the KND (GERAD 2008). Although Article 245 of Ghana's 1992 Constitution and *Local Government Act*, *1993(Act 462*) invest all local authority in the Kwahu North District Assembly (KNDA), chiefs still retain custodial roles over skin/stool lands. Accordingly, Kwahu chiefs manage stool lands "on behalf of, and in trust for the subjects of the stool in accordance with customary law and usage" (Republic of Ghana 1992: 161).

[4] Examples include land conflicts in Mozambique and Nicaragua (Borras & Franco 2011), Sudan's Nuba region (Komey 2009), Mali (De Bruijn & Osaghae), Northern and Eastern regions of Ghana (Ayee et al. 2011; De Bruijn & Osaghae), and East and Southern Africa (Okello et al. 2005).

Figure 1: Map of the Kwahu North District



Source: Kwahu North District Assembly (2010: 31).

Two main entrances lead into the KND by road. One either travels along the Nkawkaw-Adawso road in the Eastern Region and then crosses the three kilometre-wide Afram River into the district through Ekye-Amanfrom by ferry, or travels along the Kpandu-Torkor stretch in the Volta Region and then crosses the Volta Lake in one and half hours to Agordeke by ferry (see Figure 1). A third route into the district, although not commonly used, is from Atebubu in the Brong Ahafo Region.

The district is generally a low lying area of between 60 to 120 metres above sea level and drained continuously by the Afram River in the west, Volta River in the east and the Obosom River in the north. It falls within the semi-humid zone, i.e. enjoys about 1,500 isohyets of rainfall annually, and supports mixed farming. Its vegetation is characterised by dispersed short deciduous fire resistant trees and grass associated with the savannah transitional zone and savannah wood land (Codjoe and Owusu 2011; GERAD 2008;

www.ghanadistricts.com;). According to Amanor (1995: 357), areas with 1,000mm isohyets of rain annually or more are generally "characterized by mixed farming, with arable crops, cows, sheep and goats." The vegetation of the plains and the year-round availability of water not only support crop farming in the district but also support the raising of animals such as cattle, sheep and goats in large scales. So, it is not surprising that the district is identified as one of the food-baskets of Ghana and an important zone for ranching cattle by local and transhumant herders. Essentially, the district is good for ranching because of the three water bodies[5] that drain it (KNDA 2010), the abundance of grass, and the relative security in the area. As a result, Fulani nomads and their cattle are attracted to the area especially during the dry season.

The major ethnic groups in the district are the Ewe (51.5%); followed by the Akan (24.1%), the Kwahu (5.6%) and others (18.8%) (GERAD 2008). Geographically, "the Akans (Twi) [are located] in the west, Ewe in the east and along the banks of the Volta Lake while people of Northern extraction are found in most of the farming communities" (KNDA 2010: 10). More than 75% of the district's population resides in rural areas, with agriculture as their main economic activity (KNDA 2010). Agriculture is supported by the favourable climatic conditions, geo-physical characteristics of the area and the availability of arable lands. It is thus the backbone of the district's economy and accounts for 80% of the total employed labour force. Of the number employed in the agricultural sub-sector, about 85.2% are engaged in subsistence farming (KNDA 2010: 17). It is worth noting that a "majority of the farmers (90.1%) are into crop farming while the remaining 9.9% engage in mixed farming [combining crop farming and animal husbandry] (KNDA 2010: 17). Some of settler farmers own cattle, in smaller numbers, and thus do not need to employ the services of Fulani herders as the few Kwahu cattle owners may do. Settler farmers located along the Volta and Afram Rivers also engage in fishing on seasonal basis.

Nomads in KND are predominantly nationals of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sub-region whose trade thrives on accurate

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[5] They are the Volta Lake, the Afram River and the Obosom River.

and timely response to rainfall patterns. This is because "[t]he livestock production systems of West Africa are influenced by rainfall distribution" (Amanor 1995: 357). Consequently, continual migration is generally a feature of cattle production in West Africa. Disturbingly, nomads' migration has been very rapidly facilitated by desertification; an ecological problem that has affected the environment and livelihoods in the sub-region since the last half of the 20th century (Gonzalez 2001; Nicholson et al. 1998). Admittedly, cattle herding is an age-old economic sector in West Africa "which has been organised across wide geographical regions to integrate different ecological zones" (Amanor 1995: 351).

The journey of Fulani herdsmen to the district starts from their countries of origin. Fulani nomads in the district are mainly from Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Burkina Faso and Togo. They enter Ghana through villages on the Ghana-Burkina Faso border or the Ghana-Togo border and continue grazing their animals southwards (for those crossing the northern boundaries) and westwards (for those preferring to pass through the Volta Region). While herding southwards, nomads could sneak into the district through the forest areas of the Ashanti or Brong Ahafo regions. Those entering the district from the Volta Region, according to informants, hire the services of local fishermen who ferry the animals across the Volta Lake by night. While in the district from different directions, these herdsmen negotiate land tenancy agreements with Kwahu traditional rulers through local *agents*, and graze their ways to communities along the Afram River and the Volta Lake where they are guaranteed abundant grass and water for their animals. Interestingly, these are the very areas that support farming activities for most part of the year. These fertile communities include Mim Kyemfere, Bruben, Battor and Forifori.

Fulani in the district are of two categories — permanently settled and seasonal nomadic herdsmen. Permanently settled Fulani in the district are descendants of those who settled and intermarried with locals; and thus may not bother retracing their roots. This category of Fulani engages in available economic activities as locals, and may serve as intermediaries between locals and seasonal nomadic

Fulani herdsmen, especially in conflict situations. For this service, visiting Fulani would normally register their presence with the leader of the settled Fulani community. Nomadic Fulani herdsmen, on the other hand, are seasonal migrants who arrive in the district for the purposes of grazing their herds in a cycle of transhumant activity that takes them back to their countries of origin. The nomads herd their own animals and often isolate them from local ones in the outskirts of towns. They do not cage their cattle after daylight grazing to limit their movements in the night, as local cattle owners or their herders do after sunset. Fulani nomads may graze their animals during the night with high possibilities of destroying farms, intentionally or otherwise. Available evidence does not show that they engage in crop farming.

It is difficult to date the advent of farmer-herder conflict on the plains. However, informants indicate that the conflict has persisted for many years. It was initially between farmers and local cattle herders but increased in frequency and intensity with the increasing numbers of Fulani herdsmen from different West African countries. This difficulty notwithstanding, respondents agree that recent clashes between farmers and nomadic herdsmen in the district started by the first decade of the twenty-first century. This period witnessed the influx of Fulani nomadic herdsmen to the district in large numbers when they were thrown out of the Sene and Kede areas in Brong Ahafo Region and parts of the Volta Region. Since then, farmer-herder conflicts have become a yearly problem which intensified in 2010. Having been chased out of those parts of the Brong Ahafo and Volta regions, with the connivance of residents on the plains, Fulani nomads found a new haven for their business. Perhaps, had it not been for the activities of ‘local agents’, Fulani nomads would not have found protection on the plains.

Thus, the availability of highly fertile soil on the Plains that supports both crop farming and animal husbandry has put farmers and herders in a continuous competition for access to land. In addition, abundant grass and water, and the expulsion of Fulani from parts of the Brong Ahafo and Volta regions has further intensified the existing struggle for land.

Land-use and Conflicts in the KND

In the KND, the conflict between farmers and Fulani is not necessarily about competition over landownership but about land-use for productive purposes. Here, farmers do not claim ownership to lands but demand preferential treatment from landowners over visiting nomadic cattle ranchers in the district. Similarly, nomadic cattle grazers do not claim landownership but only advance the argument that they had valid contracts with land owners which allows them unrestricted access to land that had been *rented* out to them. From the above, it is clear that both categories of land users are tenants on Kwahu stool lands. Their use of land is subject to tenure agreements reached with chiefs who are custodians of lands in the district. Ironically, farmers – who are regarded as *settlers* by their host indigenous Kwahu people, see nomads on the plains as *aliens* who should not have land-use rights. Thus, it is justifiable to argue that conflict over land in the KND is about its *use*, not about *ownership*.

Field evidence in KND reveals that Fulani nomads find new homes in the district among (or close to) communities generally populated by settler farmers and fishermen of Ewe ethnic background, who allegedly do not pay required royalties on land-use to Kwahu chiefs. They grow food crops such as yam, cassava, cowpea, groundnut, maize and vegetables. The presence of Fulani nomads intensifies competition for the fertile lands that are already cultivated by settler farmers along the Volta Lake. A problem ensues when each group advances arguments to justify its right to use a particular stretch of land. While farming communities claim they have been on the land for decades and accuse Kwahu chiefs of creating avenues for conflict, Fulani nomads see no reason to be denied access to lands they had paid for based on specified terms of contracts with chiefs. It is true that transhumant Fulani herdsmen in Ghana do not own land but some of them hold certificates of occupancy in the communities they graze their cattle. In fact, such agreements between them and chiefs are reached on the blind side of farming communities in the district. As a result, nomadic

Fulani herdsmen sometimes enter areas used by farmers without a prior knowledge of the latter.

The conflicting interests of the different actors over access to land are very complicated. On the one hand, settler farmers had been pitched against nomadic herdsmen in the use of available lands by Kwahu chiefs. While settlers want lands for crop farming, Fulani nomads succeed in securing such lands to graze cattle based on their comparative financial advantage. On the other hand, Kwahu chiefs want returns on the use of traditional lands and claim that settlers do not pay required royalties on lands they used for agricultural purposes. As result, the chiefs prefer transferring occupancy of their lands to Fulani nomads without considering the fate of settler farmers. Settler farmers have, thus, been compelled to ‘fight’ Kwahu landowners and their guest Fulani in an attempt to win back lost farmlands. Settlers’ inability to confront landowners in settling their grievances explains the rising tense relations with Fulani nomads and settlers’ resort to undermining Fulani’s rights to lands they genuinely acquired from chiefs. To settlers, the soft targets in the contestation of access rights to cultivated lands are the Fulani nomads. Thus, the least provocation, (sometimes without any provocation), could trigger conflicts between farmers and Fulani nomads.

The resultant reaction by both farmers and nomadic Fulani has been to lock horns in a struggle for survival with each party believing the other poses a threat to its livelihood and its very existence. Interestingly, the contending parties have been left by traditional leaders to address their own differences through, sometimes, fatal confrontations. And with the passage of time, confrontations between farmers and Fulani in this regard have degenerated into violent conflicts that have resulted in casualties on both sides. But could something not have been done to avert such situations? This reverberates in the minds of Ghanaians.

Field evidence, however, suggests that chiefs as landowners support the presence of Fulani nomads on their lands. Chiefs gain comparatively higher dividends from their land when given to nomads than what they receive from local *settler* farmers. The practice has been that farmers negotiate for land from chiefs through their representatives. The final agreement may allow farmers to purchase or rent land for a determined period. In the Kwabena Kwao village, for instance, farmers pay an annual amount of GHC6 (less than US$3 in 2010) for every acre of farmland rented[6]. Even though chiefs consider this amount to be woefully inadequate, settler farmers either do not pay the required rent or enter traditional lands without permission. In the opinion of informants, some chiefs do not hide their disgust and anger over farmers' failure to pay required royalties. For higher revenues on their lands, chiefs reallocate lands to Fulani herdsmen thereby creating conditions for farmer-herder conflicts upon the entry of farmers into such reallocated lands.

From respondents' accounts, it appears the support enjoyed by Fulani nomads from chiefs is substantial. Informants, for instance, alleged that Kwahu chiefs openly declare their support and guarantee for Fulani nomads against the wishes of local farmers. Informants believe that this open support had emboldened Fulani nomads in the district to defy farmers and to have little hesitation whenever they act in whatever ways they consider necessary to protect their interests. This is because they (Fulani) know that they wield some amount of influence in traditional and security circles of the district. This should be worrying because doubts raised by farming communities on the commitment of local authorities to dealing with the *Fulani menace* have negatively affected KNDA's search for lasting solutions to the problem. In blatant display of arrogance, some Fulani nomads have boasted that they could get whatever they wanted because of their wealth.

Evidence from KND communities reveals the immense benefit chiefs derive from the presence of Fulani nomads. Such benefits range from cash settlements to prestations of an agreed number of cows in exchange for grazing land. Fulani nomads could be charged cash amounts equivalent to several hundreds of US Dollars and/or a number of cows as part of the terms and conditions for allocation of lands. A Fulani indicated that a Fulani herder could be charged at least a cow (with a 2010 market value of GH₵800 or US$400) before he is

[6] Interview with a farmer in the village on 18/12/10.

allowed by a chief to graze cattle in the chief's territory. The reward of this tenancy is obviously more attractive than the meagre royalties paid by farmers. Even then not all farmers pay this pittance. By understandings reached with chiefs some farmer use the land without payment.

Local informants suspect that by (re)allocating farm lands to Fulani nomads, traditional rulers aim to eject some immigrant famers, especially ethnic Ewe settler farmers, from ethnic Kwahu stool lands; because they are perceived to be cultivating the land without authority. Granted the alleged open support for Fulani by chiefs is true, it is fair to suggest that Fulani nomads are expected to contrive to eject settler farmers from stool lands. In that case, 'alien' Fulani nomads could be seen as a tool to force local farmers (who are also categorised as strangers by the chiefs) out of lands they have tilled for generations. Inasmuch as this alleged hidden motive may never be proven against chiefs, it sends a strong signal that crop farming in the district could be in danger. Preferential treatment for the highest bidder — Fulani nomads, could push farmers out of fertile land.

It must be emphasised here that preferential treatment given to cattle herders and the resultant conflict in the KND is not an isolated case on the African continent. It is, in fact, traceable to the colonial era. According to Sone (2012), a similar situation accounted for farmer-herder conflict in the Anglophone region of Cameroon in 1919. In this region, local chiefs immediately welcomed the Fulani nomadic graziers on arrival because the latter were considered more useful clients who were willing to pay higher royalties in cows and cash than farmers could pay. As a result, as observed from the north-western region of Cameroon, "[f]armers who could not rely on their local chiefs, who in the first place offered the land to the graziers on the basis of self-aggrandizement, were compelled to adopt confrontational tactics against the graziers" (Sone 2012: 85).

Perceived Causes of Farmer-Fulani Conflicts in the KND

The presence of Fulani herdsmen in local communities, and the resultant competition for and pressure on limited fertile lands, often pushes aggrieved parties to act violently in an attempt to secure their interests and balance a perceived disadvantage. Such perceived disadvantage can perpetuate mutual suspicion, fear, and intolerance among the contending parties (Folami 2010). The situation in the KND is not different from Folami's conclusion on farmer-herder relations in Nigeria. In both settings access to, and control over, land has contributed to post-conflict suspicion and insecurity between farmers and nomadic Fulani herdsmen.

The *land question* in Ghana has generated different responses from farming communities towards nomadic Fulani herdsmen; some communities have clearly articulated the centrality of land-use in farmer-herder conflicts while others prefer arguing along the lines of alleged crimes committed by Fulani nomads. A number of communities in the Kwahu North District — such as Mim Kyemfere, Bruben, Battor, Maame Krobo and Forifori, represent those that stand against nomads in Ghana. They have always cited the grabbing of farmlands by nomadic Fulani herdsmen as the main cause of the conflicts between them, and for which reason they have taken a strong stance against the latter's presence in their neighbourhoods.

Interestingly, whether a community's conflict with the nomadic herdsmen is premised on 'alien' control over local lands or not, the most immediate accusations usually levelled against the nomads include destruction of crops and farmlands, pollution of sources of drinking water, harassment and rape of women, and murder of residents/farmers who dare challenge them. This line of accusation is shared by all communities that have had strained relationships with nomads in the country. But these allegations have been strongly contested by Fulani leadership in KND and country-wide. The accused appear to have been vindicated by locals' failure to provide convincing evidence to back their accusations, especially the criminal component of the allegations. According to a settled Fulani leader, communities often desperately employ the above accusations in order to win public sympathy and support in their effort to reclaim lands that had been allocated to Fulani herdsmen by traditional rulers.[7] To him, communities are envious of Fulani nomads because of their (nomad) wealth. Expectedly, disadvantaged communities have attracted public sympathies by appealing to the sensibilities of most Ghanaians through the print and electronic media.

Fulani claim that they do not and have never raped local women; neither do they shoot at innocent or *provocative* locals. They demand evidence in the form of the corpses of people slain as proof of murder accusations levelled against them; and the testimonies of local women raped or sexually harassed. In the latter instance, some Fulani have claimed that local women rather approach them for *sex-money* exchanges because they (Fulani) are perceived to be rich due to their large herds. But do Fulani nomads' claims constitute the truth? What about communities' claim that rape victims will not report their ordeal because of social stereotypes and associated consequences? What kind of protection can the law provide to farming communities in the absence of evidence to punish alleged criminals? Thus, these back and forth claims between farming communities and Fulani nomads, and the failure of locals to provide convincing and compelling evidence to support their rape and murder allegations have rather made farmer-herder conflicts in Ghana murky and complex. The conflict presents many ambiguities and loose-fitted ends that make addressing the issue a difficult task.

It cannot be assumed that farmers would wilfully destroy their crops and farms in anticipation of a juicy compensation from a 'rich' Fulani herdsman in the neighbourhood. Fulani have accused locals of employing this strategy to deliberately extort money from them. This has been a major contested issue in the KND. Here, local bye-laws protect farmers who provide evidence to the police and the law court about Fulani livestock destroying their farms. If satisfied with the evidence presented before it, and based on technical assessment by the District Department of Agriculture (DDA), the law court

[7] Interview with a Fulani chief on 13/12/10.

would order a Fulani to pay compensation to a complainant. Ironically, field evidence from this district shows that the process of compensating a farmer takes little interest in finding out whether a Fulani was actually involved in crops destruction or not, and under what circumstance(s) that happened. Establishing the involvement of nomadic Fulani herdsman in the destruction of farms is very crucial since some locals also rear cattle in their communities. A probe into whose livestock actually did what and under what circumstance may even exonerate Fulani nomads of many allegations on farm destruction made against them since local people's herds can also destroy farms. Thus, the ambiguity presented by this farmer-Fulani problem makes the *land question* the ultimate explanation of the conflicts; all the twenty-eight respondents contacted acknowledged the centrality of land-use in the conflicts. Each party accuses the other of trespassing on their domains.

This view, however, does not in any way deny excesses committed by some nomadic Fulani herdsmen in some parts of the district. In fact, Fulani nomads in the KND conceded that their cattle sometimes enter people's farms. They advanced three possible instances under which herds may enter farms: when a herdsman loses control over the herds under his care; when farmers farm on lands reserved by traditional leaders for grazing cattle; and when farmers farm on tracks leading to water bodies used by cattle. The second and third instances given by Fulani would attract local responses that question *aliens*' right to land in settler communities. What rights have Fulani nomads to declare some areas exclusively their domain? How legitimate is any land transfer agreement between Fulani nomads and traditional leaders that denies settler communities access to land?

Thus, it can be argued that allegations of rape, murder, farm destruction and pollution of water bodies do not provide cogent grounds for wholesale bastardisation of Fulani nomads in local communities. Such accusations do not fully explain the cause(s) of tension and conflicts between communities and nomadic herdsmen. Of course, they highlight issues that should not be overlooked when addressing what has now assumed notoriety as the *Fulani* *menace* in Ghana. These issues are to be given the necessary attention, though they should not mask the overriding factor – the *land question*. Addressing the land issue should engage the efforts, time and resources of all concerned because communities are clearly not happy with the ease with which communal lands are given out to Fulani and other nomads by chiefs. That is why it is to be expected that communities would call for the eviction of Fulani nomads from local lands, as articulated by communities in the KND and other districts such as Agogo in Asante Akim North District.[8]

Effects of the Conflicts on KND

Farmer-herder conflicts in the KND have affected the district in diverse ways. Primarily, they have affected local peace, human security, food security, and the local economy at large. These effects have generally been negative and have the potency of crippling the district in the long run if a suitable solution is not found in the shortest time possible.

KND has witnessed a downward slide in peace and human security, particularly in areas where farmers and Fulani nomads have come into direct confrontations from the mid-2009 onwards. This decline left in its wake shared suspicion, fear and anger characterising daily life in the affected areas. Both parties in the conflict have had to suffer from this insecurity: the settlers fear going out to farm on the assumption that a Fulani nomad might be lurking somewhere to lay ambush on them; similarly, nomads fear going to nearby towns for the basic necessities of life because a member of the farming community may be waiting to attack them.

This state of insecurity has in turn affected the food output of both farmers and herdsmen in the district. This situation is very disturbing because field evidence has shown that several communities now depend on food supplied

[8] The youth of Agogo on October 12, 2011 gave Fulani herdsmen in the Asante-Akim North Municipality a ten-day ultimatum (ending Saturday, October 22, 2011) to re-locate with their animals or face forceful eviction (GBC, 2011).

from other places in or outside the district. This tells the extent to which one of the food baskets of Ghana is gradually turning into a dependent district for food supply. If not contained, the district stands to face imminent food insecurity in the not too distant future. Today, supply of foodstuffs has been affected; it will not be long for the supply of meat and other dairy products are affected too, if appropriate measures are not taken by all concerned.

Having in mind that both crop and animal farming employ about 90% of the total economically active population of the district (GERAD 2008), conflict has the potential of bringing the KND economy to its knees. In the event of economic collapse, the district will have to rely on other districts for almost all its needs. The conflict is, thus, a time-bomb that waits to explode into a crisis with widespread implications.

Finding a lasting solution to conflicts between farmers and Fulani herdsmen is in the interest of both parties and the general Ghanaian public. Lasting peace and security (local and national) would be achieved if the nation is able to address this problem and fashion out a strategy that will forestall any such occurrences in the future. The benefits that accrue from resolving this crisis would include improved food security and overall economic development, among others. According to a respondent, until the coming of nomadic herdsmen to the district, butchers used to travel all the way to Ashaiman in the Greater Accra Region for their supplies. The location of KND requires that a traveller crosses the Volta Lake twice in a return journey to Ashaiman. But today, as shown by field evidence, the presence of these herdsmen in the district has made meat readily available to dealers and consumers; fresh milk and milk products are available to communities; and farmers have the opportunity of using cow dung as manure on their farms.[9] The Ivorian government foresaw nomadic Fulani's economic contributions to the Ivorian economy and, therefore, encouraged their settlement as a means of strengthening the domestic livestock industry and local meat production (Stock 2013).

[9] Although there was no evidence that dung is used as manure on farms in the district, six farmers expressed their willingness to use this organic fertilizer on their farms as they did on their backyard gardens.

There is no doubt that farmers and herdsmen in the district would prefer peace to conflict. Nomadic Fulani herdsmen should be working towards peace because they benefit from symbiotic relations; by settling very close to local farming communities they can find in these communities markets for their produce. They have to sell some of their stock in order to afford local services such as health care and communication, and buy food items and other products from local people. Thus, even at the height of tensions between nomads and locals in Mim Kyemfere, for example, Fulani women could be spotted going from house to house selling *waagashie* (a local cheese of Hausa origin) to local people.

KNDA's Attempts at Solving the Problem

Surely, a lasting solution to the conflicts between farmers and nomadic Fulani herdsmen in the KND can greatly contribute to local peace, security and economic development in the district and the nation as a whole. But finding a lasting solution to this problem has really tested the willingness and capacity of the authorities and opinion leaders in society. Traditional rulers in the affected areas deny any wrong-doing on their part, local governments are confused and in a fix, while the (state) security apparatus appears powerless. The fact that these traditional rulers or their representatives have been the main conduit through which the Fulani nomads access local lands puts them at the centre of the continuous struggles between the nomads and community members. Local governments could not revoke any land agreements entered into by the chiefs with Fulani nomads, thereby undermining the authorities of the former. Nor could they do the bidding of *charged* communities by sacking all Fulani nomads from the affected neighbourhoods. Yet, they could neither shirk the responsibility of protecting their citizens nor fail to comply with ECOWAS protocols on free movement of citizens from sister states in Ghana.

It is worth noting that, even though local government structures are not formally involved in contracts between the Fulani nomads and traditional rulers, they are faced with pressures to engineer solutions when things go wrong.

Central and local governments intervene in farmer-herder conflict situations as a matter of responsibility to maintain law and order (Tonah 2002). In the KND, state institutions (including the Police, Immigration service and the law courts) have been pressured to intervene in settling disputes between Fulani nomads and farming communities. Not only that, they have been tasked to register Fulani cattle owners/herdsmen and create fodder banks for the exclusive use of cattle in a bid to regulate their activities. In extreme situations, local governments have been asked by their agitated communities to eject all Fulani nomads from their farmlands. An argument could be advanced that district authorities are enjoined to remove all obstacles to development in the district; but it is only fair that blame is not entirely laid at the doorsteps of the KNDA.

Over the years, the KNDA had greatly focused on addressing the perceived causes of individual farmer-herder conflict situations (such as destruction of crops, pollution of sources of drinking water, among others) and awarding compensations to affected farmers or their communities. This strategy had not yielded the needed results because it failed to focus on the land question. Should the KNDA rely entirely on the arrest, prosecution and awards of damages against alleged Fulani criminals, the likelihood would be that arrogant and evil-minded perpetrators among them would continue to commit the very crimes they were found guilty of and pay compensations from their 'huge' wealth. To prevent this situation, the court would need to fine Fulani offenders amounts that would deter them from committing such offences in future.

Though KNDA cannot dictate to chiefs in matters relating to allocation of lands, it can limit the movements of nomadic cattle to specially allocated areas. Thus, the idea of creating five fodder banks espoused by the KNDA under the Afram Plains Development Project is laudable. This comes at a time when most West African governments have no clearly defined enforceable policies meant to isolate herders and their cattle from cultivated lands (Wilson-Fall 2000). A fodder bank is designed to cover a land area of about 2 square miles – having all facilities needed for cattle ranching, such as feed, veterinary services and water. But work on these projects has been very slow since the acquisition of lands for the five fodder banks in the district. For instance, the five-year phased project near Domeabra village which started in 2008, before the last escalation of the crisis, is yet to be ready for use. Is it that the African Development Bank and the Government of Ghana have failed to honour their commitments to the project?

Essentially, all stakeholders need to support the efforts being made to prevent the occurrence of farmer-herder conflicts in the district. Chiefs have the responsibility of avoiding multiple allocations of lands to competing parties. They can pursue legal processes to ensure defaulting settler farmers pay mutually agreed land rents to eliminate the temptation of reallocating farmlands to other users. In the meantime, local government authorities, farming communities and Fulani nomads can work out mechanisms for reducing tensions in the district. The KNDA could, for example, roll out educational campaigns to create awareness among farmers and the nomads on relevant Ghanaian and ECOWAS laws to the situation and the consequences of violating them. Farmers and nomadic herdsmen should renew commitments to respecting others' rights and interests on land matters. Finally, there is the need for chiefs, farmers and Fulani nomads to support the creation of fodder banks across the district. Chiefs would have to release suitable lands for the creation of fodder banks; farmers should avoid encroaching areas demarcated for the projects; and nomads should limit themselves to such banks as created for them. Fulani nomads could be levied to support the construction of kraals.

Conclusion

The crisis between farmers and Fulani herdsmen in Ghana has taken a complex dimension because a party in the conflict — the Fulani, has been portrayed as necessarily violent and guilty. This is manifested in the manner in which any case involving a herdsman is attributed to Fulani. Stereotyping the Fulani as primordially violent is counterproductive as it puts the aggrieved party on the defensive to counter negative attitudes towards them, which may be violent in nature (see Okello et al. 2005). Yet, 73.4% of respondents hold the opinion that Fulani are not necessarily criminals and are willing to live peacefully with farming communities. The Fulani nomads also acknowledge that it is in their interest to ensure peaceful coexistence with farmers because of their symbiotic relationship[10] with agriculturalists. This is an old tradition that they (Fulani) have learnt to honour since the beginning of the 20th century; a tradition that they need to nurture in order for them to continue enjoying the favourable conditions in their new homes and the hospitality of the populations they interact with (Tonah 2002)[11]. Farmers and their communities need not provoke them.

And as we saw earlier, land issues tend to lead to conflicts between competing groups because of people's special attachment to it. According to Borras and Franco (2011: 1), the link between land and conflict "is not a contentious issue among and between scholars, policy makers and activists across ideological divides" because it is the primary economic factor of production in rural communities and a social insurance for many rural households.

In order not to disadvantage farmers or stifle cattle and the dairy industry in the district, a win-win strategy has to be adopted by the local authority in the district. By win-win strategy, reference is made to collaborative negotiations that guarantee mutual gains for both parties. Such a win-win approach will serve the interest of farmers and their communities and the nomads alike. In this regard, it is argued that ranching is the solution to this crisis between farmers and herders. It would solve the problems associated with free-ranging and facilitate each party's ability to achieve their own goals. ECOWAS could make it mandatory for member countries to support ranching regardless of whether it is to benefit Fulani or local communities. This will limit the movements of nomads

[10] Fulani need agricultural and other products from farming communities to meet some of their needs.

[11] Other literature suggest that traditionally Fulani fought agriculturists and other herders who stood in their way. Herders were usually better fighters and they pressed home that advantage in their encounters. Pastoralists, generally, are said to be "more ready to express anger and to take direct action" (Goldschmidt 1971: 16–17, as cited in Linquist, 2016: 4) in their attempt "to protect their herds from rustlers, wild animals, and other threats" (McGregor 2017: 34).

and their herds to known locations where crop farming will not be done. Otherwise, competition for land will continue to bring farmers and herdsmen into violent confrontations. The district has promised constructing kraals that would provide services to nomads, as discussed earlier, but communities are yet to see the promise coming to fruition. Even if Government continues to pursue this option, the kraals should not be constructed with public funds. The KNDA should levy nomads and facilitate the process of their construction.

It is argued here that any effort that disadvantages any of the parties will surely fail. This is because a win-lose strategy will benefit only a party in the conflict. If a win-lose strategy is taken for any reason, the crisis will persist and breed continuous tension and escalation of violence between settler farming communities and Fulani nomads. In the long run, local economy (and national economy by extension) will also be affected – low meat supply, falling crop yields, and their implication on businesses and nutrition. But in doing so, a balance should be attained in ensuring compliance with Ghanaian and international laws (such as ECOWAS protocols) to ensure local human and food security and the safety of Fulani nomads in the district.

Finally, it is in the interest of the KNDA, citizens and their traditional rulers, and Fulani nomads to support any effort that aims at forging partnership(s) between them. This is because the KNDA cannot afford to expend time and resources in addressing farmer-herder conflicts on daily basis; citizens should enjoy security of all kinds in going about their daily businesses; and Fulani nomads should find new homes in farming communities.

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