
Paper 11: Settlement and land use by Fulani pastoralists in case study areas

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Abstract

Abet was selected for studies of settlement and land use because the area represents a widespread situation in the subhumid zone: Fulani cattle keepers settled amidst crop farmers and practicing cropping.

The Fulani settled because herd movements were no longer considered necessary and settled life was viewed as more comfortable. They settled close to farming communities, which they regard as customers for meat, milk and manure. In addition, they value the presence of public services such as schools and a dispensary.

The settled Fulani live year-round at one site, but shift every few years to another site a few kilometres away, in contrast to the transhumant Fulani who come into Abet from the north each dry season. The influx of transhumant herds creates competition for grazing resources. The settled Fulani do not have specific grazing areas for herds belonging to individual families or groups.

Settled Fulani homesteads are generally located on marginal land bordering hamlet areas and on fields which farmers have left fallow for several years. The Fulani do not own land in Abet, nor do they hold certificates of occupancy. However, in adjacent areas like Zonkwa and Kachia, some Fulani have gained land rights through purchase or after lengthy occupation of unclaimed land. The Kaje and Kamantan farmers in Abet generally regard the Fulani as only temporary occupants of their land. Of all civil complaints in the courts involving Fulani, very few were land disputes *per se*. The main reason for suing Fulani was crop damage by cattle.

The prime motive of the few Abet Fulani who have moved to the Kachia Grazing Reserve in the last 5 years has been to gain access to adequate land for cropping and grazing without problems with farmers. However, because the farmers in and around the grazing reserve have not been compensated by the government for their land, these Fulani are realizing that relations with farmers may not be any better than in Abet, while grazing is definitely worse. Rather than living in false expectation of security, the Fulani in Abet are aware of the need to come to terms with the farmers with whom they co-exist, and make conscious efforts to do so.

Introduction

As an area which represents a widespread situation in the Nigerian subhumid zone - Fulani cattle keepers settling amidst crop farmers and becoming agropastoralists - Abet was selected for detailed studies of settlement and land use by Fulani and of farmer-Fulani relations. Some comparative studies were made in the Kachia Grazing Reserve, an area of government-assisted pastoral settlement.

Abet study area

Settled Fulani comprise almost one tenth of the population on the Abet Plains. As Muslims, the Fulani are not only an ethnic but also a religious minority in a largely Christianized area. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, Fulani - Hausa jihād forces penetrated into what is now southern Kaduna State with a following of cattle-keeping Fulani. Kachichere, an upland area some 30 km east of Abet, became a centre of Fulani settlement. However, for some time already Fulani herders had been passing through or camping for several months on the Abet Plains in the dry season. Because the Abet area was not completely subjugated during Fulani rule in northern Nigeria, local administrative posts are held by members of the indigenous population. The present-day Fulani inhabitants thus cannot take advantage of association with a local ruling elite.

The settled Fulani in Abet are mainly of the Kachichere group; only about 5% are non-Kachichere who have given up a migratory existence within the last few years. A small number of Kachichere Fulani families have been living in the Abet area for up to four generations, but the majority settled there - i.e. began to live at one site year-round - within the last three decades.

The Fulani homestead, bukkaaru or ruga (Hausa word for 'cattle encampment'), includes one to several households: cooked pots of food may be shared, but the herds of the individual households are usually managed separately and household heads generally farm individually and control separate stores of grain. The homesteads in Abet comprise mainly domed grass huts which must be renewed every 3 or 4 years, but some homesteads contain one or several more durable buildings with mud-brick walls, thatched or metal roofs, and wooden or metal doors. As a rule, the first such structure is built for the household head, either in the traditional circular style or in the form of a long rectangle with two or more rooms like the modern dwellings of the local farmers. Other structures may include grain-drying platforms, thatched mud-walled granaries similar to those in local farm compounds, and shelters for poultry, calves, sheep or more rarely - goats. A recent innovation is a thatched kitchen hut for each wife.

Fulani settlement sites

Most present-day household heads did not themselves make the decision to settle; rather this was made by an earlier generation. The most common reason for initial settlement by forefathers is that the family was 'tired of moving', that migration caused 'too much suffering'. These Fulani obviously view a settled existence as a more comfortable life-style. Family histories reveal that the time of initial settlement usually coincided with the time when the family first started grain farming, although the need to farm was seldom explicitly stated as a reason for settling. Cropping and year-round settlement do not necessarily coincide: many of the transhumant Fulani who spend the dry season in Abet now cultivate at their wet-season bases further north, and there are settled Fulani in Abet with large herds or off-farm sources of income who do little or no cropping.

With regard to choice of Abet rather than elsewhere for settlement, good-quality farmland is mentioned by the Fulani as a favourable feature of the area. However, the prime reasons

stated are the availability of sufficient forage and water for the herds throughout the year and a healthy environment for livestock. Further advantages for animal production in a farming area like Abet are, according to the Fulani:

1. Herding is easier and safer on cleared land.
2. Vegetation on recent fallow is of better quality and more easily accessible for grazing than in uncleared woodland.
3. Early grass growth on last year's cropped land is particularly valuable for grazing.
4. Crop residues provide good early dry-season grazing, leading to higher milk production and conception rates, and a build-up of reserves for later in the season.

Abet also has many low-lying fadama areas which are valued by the Fulani for dry-season grazing of their herds.

Markets for sale of milk products are mentioned by the Fulani women as a criterion for choice of settlement site, but the male household heads do not usually give this the same importance. The men have close links with the local butchers and traders, who purchase livestock from them. The farmers also buy stock directly from the Fulani, either for family or religious celebrations or as an investment of earnings from crops. In addition, the farmers pay the Fulani for manuring cropland with their cattle herds. The Fulani regard the farmers not only as a market for milk, butter, meat and manure, but also as a convenient source of crop products for purchase. The Fulani are attracted by the opportunities in an established farming area like Abet to hire skilled farm labour for ridging and weeding. The farmers are also a source of crop management knowledge appropriate to the location; the Fulani, who say they have learned through observation, have adopted local farming techniques. A further attraction of a relatively densely populated area like Abet is that there are already established public services, e.g. schools and a dispensary, of which the Fulani are eager to take advantage.

The settled Fulani live year-round at one site but shift to other sites a few kilometres away every few years. Reasons for shifting include: a request by a farmer for the return of loaned land, the desire of Fulani to join friends or relatives who have moved, departure from a site where cattle have fallen ill or died, gaining better access to motorable roads and taxi routes, and avoiding the risk of crop damage in fields which farmers began to cultivate close to the Fulani homestead after it had been established. In many cases, the deserted homestead area is then cultivated by Kaje or Kamantan farmers wishing to take advantage of the soil fertility from accumulated animal manure.

Access to land

Settled Fulani homesteads are generally located on marginal land bordering farming hamlet areas, and on fields which farmers have left fallow for several years. None of the Fulani in Abet owns land there, nor have any obtained official certificates of land occupancy. Only two have agreements for permanent land use, in both cases grants of land made by village heads in the presence of witnesses. However, in adjacent areas still within the Abet aerial survey area, some Fulani have gained land rights through purchase or after lengthy occupation of unclaimed land. For example, in Madauchi close to the Kaje centre of Kurmin B. Zonkwa, one clan of Kachichere Fulani holds customary rights of land occupancy, having settled three generations ago on previously uncultivated land. The leading family in the clan later shifted their homestead further south but returned to Madauchi after 24 years; their claim to the land was recognized by the local Kaje community.

On the Abet Plains, however, the Fulani are generally regarded as only temporary occupants of any particular piece of land. Each time the Fulani shift their homesteads, they make new arrangements with farmers or village leaders for rights to use specific areas for dwelling and cropping. In most cases, no time limit is set, but rights to crop fields not contiguous with the homestead site must be renewed annually. The farmers do not demand payment, but a Fulani wishing to retain permission for land use customarily provides cattle manure free of charge for the farmer's fields and makes the occasional gift of meat or even a calf to the farm family. Until recently, it was generally understood by Fulani and farmers in Abet that livestock are free to graze any uncropped or harvested area, with the exception of certain village reserves, e.g. for thatching grass.

The farming community is willing to loan land to the Fulani mainly so as to have access to animal manure, which is particularly valued for the farmers' ginger fields, but also for grain crops. Ginger is one of the main cash crops in the area, and requires organic matter for proper rhizome development. Farmers are prepared to pay the Fulani for keeping cattle overnight on fields before planting, and those farmers who loan land to the Fulani can expect to receive manure at reduced rates or free of charge. Another advantage of allowing Fulani to occupy farm land which is temporarily not being cultivated by the farmers, often because of labour shortage, is that less bush encroachment occurs, so that less labour is required for clearing when the farmers decide to use the land again.

Land-use conflicts

Because land-based innovations in livestock production require that pastoralists have access to land, and because it was thought that land conflicts might be serious in this area of relatively high cultivation density and significant Fulani population, a study was made of land issues as reflected in court cases over the period 1960-1979 (van der Valk, 1981). It was found that, contrary to general belief, land disputes in the local court (Zonkwa) constituted only a small proportion of all civil complaints involving Fulani. The main reason for suing Fulani was crop damage by cattle. There was no significant increase in the occurrence of such crop damage cases with increasing human and livestock pressure on the land. Rather, the incidence rate fluctuated over the years and was seemingly influenced by chance events such as draught or the wide distribution of fertilizer during the Operation Feed the Nation campaign. Even in those cases settled eventually out of court (generally arbitrated by the village head), it was found that crop damage by farmers' animals (pigs, goats) was more frequent than damage by Fulani cattle and sheep. Out of all 204 cases of crop damage by animals, 65% involved Fulani; thus, the problem is not exclusively that of the Fulani. However, the Fulani were more often ordered to pay compensation. Not reflected in this study are the cases settled between individuals before reaching the traditional ruler or the court, reported in interviews with farmers and Fulani to be the majority of crop damage incidents involving Fulani-owned livestock. Settlement of the incident normally consists of a payment by the Fulani to the farmer, usually in cash but sometimes also by way of providing manure for cropping.

Since the study of court cases was completed, there have been isolated incidents of conflict between Fulani and Kaje individuals. As a result, customary Fulani grazing rights in Abet have been somewhat restricted. Whereas the Fulani could previously graze their herds freely on crop residues in farmers' fields, the owner of the first herd entering a harvested field must now ask permission of the field owner. Not all Fulani are adhering to this new unwritten rule which the farmers have been trying to implement over the last 2 years (the 1982/83 and 1983/84 dry seasons). In addition, Kaje farmers are now objecting to herds grazing cropland after the first rains of the wet season, because the cattle's hooves compact the soil, making it more difficult to cultivate. Monitoring of farmer Fulani relations in Abet should continue in order to see whether a trend is developing or whether the situation will return to normal. In any case, a waning of the mutual dependence between farmers and Fulani is clearly occurring: the increased availability of mineral fertilizers has reduced farmers' dependence on Fulani herds

for soil fertility maintenance, and increased cropping activity by the Fulani has reduced their dependence on farmers' grains and crop residues. Whether these developments will have a negative effect on farmer Fulani relations remains to be seen.

The Fulani have one main complaint about the farmers: that they burn too extensively. Each dry season, the farmers burn cropland, grassland and bush, primarily to flush out game but also to clear fields of debris and to protect homes from uncontrolled fires. Herders bring cattle to burnt areas to graze the relatively nutritious regrowth, but complain that the animals are more in need of the bulk of vegetation which was lost to fire.

The settled Fulani also blame the transhumant Fulani for depletion of dry-season grazing resources. Two major cattle migration routes cut directly across the Abet Plains. Herders from the Bauchi Plateau pass through Abet before and during the grain harvest in November/December, en route to the Abuja area above the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers, and return through Abet in April/May. In January/February, Fulani based in Kano State, after having harvested their crops and grazed their herds on crop residues there, move into the Abet area and southwest into Jabaland to spend the dry-season, returning to the north in May/June when Abet farmers have begun to plant. Dry-season cattle numbers increase by about two thirds over wet-season numbers in the Abet aerial survey area (Milligan et al, 1979). The dry-season camps of the transhumant Fulani are interspersed between settled Fulani homesteads and farmers' compounds, often on harvested or fallow fields.

The influx of transhumant herds in the dry season creates competition for grazing resources in Abet. Moreover, a few herds from the Zonkwa and Kachia areas (15- 60 km from Abet) also graze the area in the dry season. Rough calculations reveal that, in the Abet case study area of ca 60 km², non-resident herds account for more than one third of total cattle grazing days during the 6-month dry season. The settled Fulani have not been able to reserve specific grazing areas for herds belonging to individual households or groups of families such as members of a clan. Except for a few weeks spent following the first rains of the wet season and irregular cases of wet- or dry-season movement of all or part of a herd, the Fulani settled in Abet normally graze their herds within about 5 km of the homestead. However, any other settled or transhumant herd is free to graze the same area. Many Abet Fulani have expressed the desire for the assistance of some government agency to exclude transhumant herds from areas customarily grazed by settled herds; they do not see how they could implement such grazing controls themselves.

Livestock watering points in the Abet area are, like grazing areas, not reserved for exclusive use by certain individuals or groups of livestock keepers. Several flowing streams provide ample water in the wet season, and there is still enough surface water in stream beds for the needs of both settled and transhumant herds throughout the dry season. No wells or water holes need to be dug for watering livestock. The Fulani take their animals to water two or three times a day in the dry season. They regard Abet as an area well favoured with water.

Socio-political organization of the Fulani

An investigation by ILCA into forms of Fulani socio-political organization above the level of individual households revealed that they presently have limited influence in defining land-use patterns (Okali and Sule, 1980). The traditional political leader of an agnatic lineage group of Fulani pastoralists is the ardo, who either inherits title and position from his father or gains recognition on the merits of his personal abilities and prosperity. To encourage the settling of pastoralists and supervision of herds, these traditional leaders were incorporated into the colonial administrative structure and given responsibilities, primarily in collecting the cattle tax (jangali) and in campaigns against animal disease. The ardos were encouraged to establish permanent villages in the wet-season grazing areas of their followers; each is now responsible for a specific area rather than a specific group of people.

Since the abolition of jangali in 1976, the official role of the ardo has been vague. Present activities of an ardo include organizing Fulani access to veterinary and agricultural services, identifying diseased cattle and restricting their movement, settling disputes between Fulani over property inheritance, and - in conjunction with the village head as representative of the farmers settling disputes between Fulani and farmers over land use or crop damage by livestock.

In Abet, one ardo is officially responsible for the Fulani living in Kaje areas and another for those living in Kamantan areas. Each ardo has three or four assistants who are responsible for Fulani living in subsections of these areas. The ardo for Kajeland appears to have little contact with the Fulani settled on the Abet Plains on the edge of his territory; the ardo for Kamantanland (a smaller territory) serves as the Abet Fulani's link to veterinary, agricultural and administrative services and is their representative in negotiations and disputes with local farmers.

A recent development in the socio-political organization of the Fulani is the Miyetti Allah Association, established in 1972 to promote the welfare of Fulani pastoralists and to represent their interests before government bodies. While a written constitution exists, many club branches are unaware of it and have formulated their own diverse goals, emphasizing literacy, Islamic education, and improved animal husbandry. There are at least 12 branches of the association in Kaduna State, but there are no regular meetings, no full-time officials, minimal record keeping, and sporadic attendance at meetings. Achievements such as the building of classrooms are due more to individual initiative and sponsorship than to the organization of members per se. The Miyetti Allah is a movement aimed at encouraging Fulani to claim their rights through education and settlement, but it has no authority in the domains of most concern to pastoralists, namely disease control and land rights. Consequently, it must content itself in assisting in court cases and in publicizing the land rights issue. As with the ardos, who are at least recognized as having authority, the Miyetti Allah has difficulties in organizing widespread involvement and continuing commitment of individual pastoralists, who have a tradition of relative independence in their production activities.

Kachia Grazing Reserve

In view of the inability of most Fulani cattle keepers, either as individuals or through their socio-political organization, to gain secure rights to land, they have shown increasing interest in the government grazing reserves. While an objective of the Grazing Reserve law has been to encourage the settlement of nomads, none of the current settlers on the Kachia reserve were previously nomadic pastoralists. All are Kachichere Fulani who have been resident in southern Kaduna State (formerly Southern Zaria Emirate) for generations. Several households had been living in the Kurmin Biri area, although they might have relocated every few years within a limited radius. The other households which have settled in the reserve within the past 6 years have mainly come from the Abet, Zangon Katab, Kachia, Zonkwa, Ungwar Rimi and Kagoro areas, all within 100 km of Kurmin Biri.

The prime motive of the Fulani for resettling within the reserve has been to obtain secure usufructuary rights to land where they can settle permanently without being disturbed by farmers. The grazing reserve is seen as offering this opportunity, as land which "belongs to the Fulani". All the Fulani had encountered problems with farmers at their previous sites in terms of crop damage charges and difficulties in obtaining sufficient cropland. In addition to this desire for undisturbed use of land, Fulani who settle in the reserve expect that the government will provide facilities and services such as water, veterinary care, insect control and tractor hire for land clearing.

In the grazing reserve, settlement sites are chosen mainly on the basis of suitability of land for

cropping, since the cattle can be herded more widely for grazing. Thus, some Fulani are settling near indigenous farmers, since it is assumed that farmers have already selected the good farm land. Such locations near farmers also have the advantage of being relatively clear, flat and possibly even previously cropped, so cultivation is relatively easy, and there is road access and a taxi service. In contrast, a few Fulani have purposefully not settled close to farmers, preferring more isolated sites but still seeking good farm land. Much of the reserve is considered stony and unsuitable for cropping.

While the stated primary determinant of settlement site in nearly all cases is suitability of land for cropping, other factors are considered simultaneously, namely closeness to water and closeness to the main road, or access by road to markets and schools. Fulani children were attending schools before moving to the reserve, and continuation of their education is considered vital by the settled Fulani.

Despite Fulani expectations of security of tenure once they move to the grazing reserve, the reserve has not been gazetted and the indigenous Ikulu farmers are demanding payment for their land. Farmers clearly expect the government to pay for their land; this may make the land situation in the reserve more volatile than in non-reserve settlement areas. Certain tensions and hostilities exist: farmers refusing to grant Fulani and grazing reserve staff alike access to certain areas, farmers demanding unreasonable crop damage charges, and farmers purposefully opening up bushland for cultivation in order to restrict grazing areas. Numerous threats have been reported, but there has been no major conflict to date. The Fulani express disappointment about the government's delay in resolving the land compensation issue and about recurring Fulani - farmer antagonism. However, there is a general feeling among the pastoralists who have moved to the reserve that the government will eventually pay and/or handle any problems.

While there has been an eightfold increase in Fulani settlement within the reserve over the past 6 years, there are still only some 34 households on a reserve which started operations in the early 1970s. While the development and promotion of a grazing reserve is a long-term process, there are certain factors apparently impeding Fulani settlement and/or permanence on the reserve. These are largely the same issues which, in reverse, lead to the spontaneous settlement by Fulani in areas of higher population and cultivation densities. Impediments to settlement on the reserve are:

1. The relative absence of socio-economic amenities, including markets, schools, health services and neighbours, considered necessary for a settled existence.
2. A shrubland ecology which makes herding difficult, harbours wild animals, holds the risk of uncontrollable bush fires that deplete dry-season forage bulk, and results in an isolated existence where children cannot play safely.
3. The minimal presence of fallowland, crop residue and fadama grazing resources, which are valued feedstuffs; consequently, in the dry season, many Fulani extend their grazing orbits outside the reserve boundaries or transfer their herds to other areas, both of which strategies make demands on labour; 30% of the herd managers in 1984 transferred part or all of their respective herds off the grazing reserve in the dry season.
4. The lack of labour available to hire on account of the small farming population; consequently, while there is land on the reserve available for farming and pasture development, the labour constraint prevents it from being fully exploited.
5. The influx of transhumant Fulani in the dry season who compete for the limited grazing resources and whose herds are thought to spread disease; since this is a

government grazing reserve for settled Fulani, the settlers expect the government to ban the movement of transhumant Fulani into the reserve, but this has not been done.

6. Above all, as discussed previously, a growing friction with the indigenous farmers over land use. Because most of the Fulani moved to the reserve from higher population areas, they have, in effect, given up advantages such as more socioeconomic amenities, fallowland and crop residue grazing, and the availability of labour for hire, in order to secure land rights without disturbance from farmers. Yet problems with farmers still occur on the grazing reserve and, at the same time, grazing possibilities are more limited and living conditions more severe than in many non-reserve areas where Fulani are settling. However, the Fulani in the reserve have the distinct advantage of not being confined by the amount of land available to them for cropping, and they do expect the government eventually to resolve land-use competition with indigenous farmers and transhumant Fulani.

Not all Fulani are so optimistic. On the Abet Plains, for example, Fulani who had contemplated moving to the Kachia Grazing Reserve or had even begun to build huts there, have now decided to remain in Abet at least until the land situation in the reserve is resolved. In Abet, the position of the Fulani is fairly clear: as long as they recognize the claims of the indigenous farmers to ownership of the land, they can obtain rights to use the land at least temporarily without having to expend capital to purchase it or labour to clear it, and they retain the flexibility to move herd and homestead whenever the need or desire arises. The benefits which the farmers and Fulani are gaining from each other in the way of crop livestock and socio-economic interactions ensure that each group makes an effort to come to terms with the other. The Fulani may not have the long-term security of tenure on free land (as promised but not always realized by the Grazing Reserve Law), but they and the landowners have at least evolved a system of relatively conflict-free and mutually beneficial coexistence.

Conclusions

The above observations are important because they highlight some of the factors involved in assisting settlement or resettlement of agropastoralists. They also demonstrate that agropastoralists can, in the right circumstances, settle peacefully amongst arable farming communities. This peaceful settlement is encouraging because it is unrealistic to expect more than a minority of agropastoralists to settle on reserves, since there is neither enough free land nor adequate funds with which to compensate resident farmers.

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