FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK & PEST CONTROL SERVICES

NIGERIAN NATIONAL LIVESTOCK RESOURCE SURVEY

FULBE, FULANI AND FULFULDE IN NIGERIA: DISTRIBUTION AND IDENTITY

WORKING PAPER SERIES. No. 23

[CIRCULATION VERSION]

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RESOURCE INVENTORY & MANAGEMENT LIMITED

[Original Version, August, 1990]

[Revised Version, November, 1994]

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1. Introduction

In discussions of pastoralism in Nigeria the Fulɓe [usually known by the Hausa name 'Fulani'] are frequently characterised as nomadic herders who own most of the cattle in the Federation. In reality, however, only a limited number of the people who call themselves 'Fulɓe ' own cattle and only some of those actually speak the language Fulfulde. At the same time, Fulfulde is widely spoken as a second language in parts of Adamawa [Adamawa and Taraba States] while in a few cases people who originally spoke other languages have given up their language in favour of Fulfulde. This paper† is intended to clarify some of the issues surrounding the identity of the Fulɓe and their language.

At the same time, the conventional stereotypes of the Fulɓe as living in Northern Nigeria are becoming less and less true, year by year. It is therefore appropriate to try and remap the distribution of the people and their language. This working paper is accompanied by three maps of the distribution of the Fulɓe and Fulfulde in Nigeria. They are based on various work on the linguistic geography of Nigeria since 1979 combined with the most recent findings coming from the National Livestock Census, 1989-1990 (Crozier & Blench, 1992, RIM, 1992, Bourn et al., 1994).

To understand more precisely the reason for the present situation it is necessary to know something more about the historical movement of the Fulɓe into Nigeria. This historical note explains the background to the present distribution of the Fulɓe people and the Fulfulde language and to record the present status of the language.

2. The History of the Fulɓe in Nigeria

The exact period when Fulɓe pastoralists first moved into Nigeria is unknown, but it is generally assumed that they first arrived as nomads in the far north during the 16th or 17th centuries. During this early period they were almost certainly confined to a narrow strip along the northern border of what is today Nigeria. The factors preventing southern expansion of the Fulɓe remain controversial, but it is likely that attempts to move south of this line would have resulted in major losses from trypanosomiases.

By processes that remain obscure, in the early nineteenth century the Fulɓe had developed a substantial urban, sedentary class, especially of religious scholars. Their commitment to Islam and the dedication of their followers stimulated the development of an effective military machine and the Jihad of Usman dan Fodio was successfully launched in 1804. Within thirty years, the Hausa kingdoms and a number of peripheral kingdoms, such as Borgu and Nupe, had fallen to the Fulɓe. This rapidly accentuated the difference between the pastoralists (*Fulɓe na'i*) and the urban Fulɓe (*Fulɓe wuro*).

One of the effects of this political and military expansion was to clear a way for the southward movement of pastoralists. After the pacification of the Nupe hinterland after the establishment of Bida as the capital of the Fulɓe in the 1850's, Fulɓe pastoralists began to move down to the low-lying pastures along the Niger River (RIM, 1989). Following a similar pattern they began to move onto the grasslands of the Jos Plateau and to settle the plains around the Emirate of Bauchi (Morrison, 1982).

A parallel expansion in Cameroun at the same time led to the gradual colonization of the grassy uplands of Adamawa throughout the nineteenth century (Boutrais, 1986). During its last two decades these pastoralists began to move westwards again and to colonize the Mambila and Fali Plateaux (RIM, 1984 & Blench, 1984, 1991, 1994).

It seems likely that at this period the herders could only exploit the pastures of the northern wetlands (such as the Hadeija-Jama'are river basin) and the subhumid 'Middle Belt' in the dry season -when the rains came the bulk of the herds would be sent northwards into the semi-arid zone to prevent diseases carried by tsetse and other biting flies.

†This paper was prepared as a working paper to accompany the documentation for the National Livestock Census of Nigeria in 1990. I am indebted to the numerous reports from field researchers in various parts of the country for information on the distribution of the Fulɓe. This data has been combined with my own field observations over the period 1979-1990. I should especially like to thank Alhaji Natta Ala Sambo and Dr. C. Di Domenico for their help in revising the southern boundaries of Fulɓe expansion and for comments on the first draft. The present version has been slightly updated for circulation in 1994.

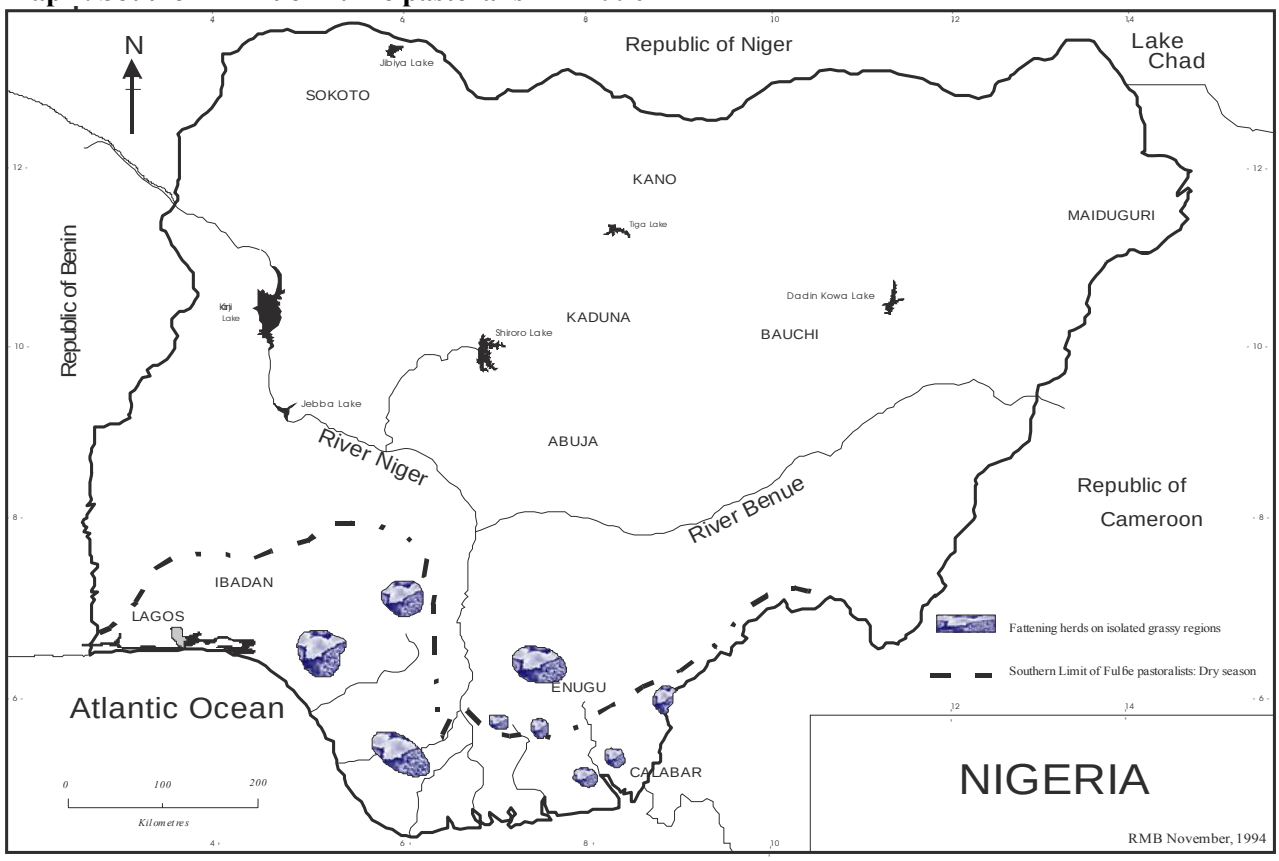
The second great impetus to southward expansion of the pastoralists was the relative security of the colonial era. It is disputed whether the tsetse control programmes themselves made these new pastures available or whether the expansion of population in the Middle Belt coincidentally acted to eliminate both vectors (the wild animals) and the forest habitats of the tsetse fly. At any rate, pastoralists were soon keeping zebu cattle within the Middle Belt all year round. As a result of this, by the era of Independence in 1960, the Fulɓe had already pushed as far south as the derived savannah in northern Oyo State and had begun to line both banks of the Niger-Benue system.

During the three decades 1960-1990 a new force began to come into play -the expansion of cultivation in the semi-arid zone. Most of the classic texts on the Fulɓe in Nigeria describe groups living in the far north (e.g. St. Croix, 1944, Hopen, 1958 & Stenning, 1959). However, just as the expansion of cultivation in Niger has had the effect of driving the WoDaaBe pastoralists further and further north (Swift, 1984), so in Nigeria a similar process has made parts of Sokoto, Kano and Katsina states unavailable to cattle owners with viable herds. The few Fulɓe that remain in these areas are generally hired herders looking after household herds and traction bulls.

In consequence, many pastoralists have been compelled to seek new pastures since about 1970. The most common response has been to move down into the Middle Belt, pressurizing the Fulɓe already there. So, there has been a movement even further south. For example, the Fulɓe first began to move into the Igbo areas of Anambra State in about 1975 -and in 1990 the dry season exploitation of grass near Kaiama (Rivers State) was recorded. The demand for meat in the urban centres of the south is such that there are now recognised centres for 'fattening herds'. These are grassy patches within the forest zone where cattle are kept for various lengths of time to be fattened for the market. This practice has arisen because of the premium price of fat stock compared with the economies of scale in herding them these isolated patches of pasture close to markets.

Map 1 shows the southern limit of Fulɓe in wet and dry seasons as recorded in 1990 and also marks the location of isolated regions of 'fattening herds'.

Map 1. Southern limit of FulBe pastoralism in 1990



3. Fulɓe and Hausa: Linguistic, Cultural and Ethnic Identity

The pattern of the spread of the Fulɓe in Nigeria throughout the nineteenth century was primarily through military conquest, followed by the immigration of pastoral groups. In the twentieth century, the pattern has been inverted and expansion has primarily been the result of pastoralists seeking new grazing.

One feature of the spread of urban Fulɓe is their gradual tendency to lose their language: after several generations they will be likely to speak the language of the people they conquered. In most cases this is Hausa, but the Fulɓe elites in Bida now speak only Nupe and settled farmers near Oyo speak only Yoruba. This generalization does not apply to Cameroun, where Fulfulde has remained the principal language of the Lamidates of the North.

At the same time, Fulɓe in Nigeria are unwilling to give up their ethnic identity -they remain Fulɓe. Thus the rulers of Nupe follow Nupe custom in every respect and do not speak Fulfulde -but they regard themselves as Fulɓe and are still so called by their Nupe subjects. This is not only true of ruling elites; in many parts of the densely settled regions of Hausaland -especially in Sokoto, Kano and Katsina the Fulɓe became cultivators. The process whereby they became subsistence farmers is unclear -but presumably successive crises reduced herd numbers and made agricultural production inevitable. For example, the series of rinderpest epidemics at the end of the nineteenth century and the droughts in the early twentieth would have badly affected semi-sedentary pastoralists without the flexibility to move long distances in search of pasture or isolation from epizootics.

Such groups have gradually adopted the culture of the neighbouring Hausa farmers. Communities calling themselves 'Fulani' can be found throughout Hausaland -but where there is no room for mobile pastoralists, Fulfulde has effectively disappeared. A similar process has occurred in Ogun and northern Ọyọ States in the southwest of Nigeria (Di Domenico, p.c.). The original pastoralists to enter this area came from Borgu, as early as the 1940's and settled in close proximity to the Yoruba. Although they are still percieved as 'Fulani' many speak neither Fulfulde nor Hausa but only Yoruba and are in many cases cultivators similar to their neighbours.

The situation in northern Bauchi State (east-central Nigeria) is more complex in this respect -most of the sedentary communities of 'Fulani' still speak Fulfulde -but the younger generation generally prefer Hausa and there is every reason to believe that Fulfulde will disappear in Bauchi in two generations. However, the differences occur where these processes of acculturation have taken place.

4. Fulfulde as a Vehicular Language

Although Fulfulde is more closely associated with ethnic identity than Hausa in one region of Nigeria it has become a vehicular language. In the wake of the movement eastwards of the Jihad and the establishment of the Lamidate at Yola, Fulfulde was established as a *lingua franca* in a wide swathe of northern Nigeria east of Bauchi.

Fulfulde was originally promoted by the colonial authorities and by the church, throughout Adamawa. Taylor's (1932) well-known dictionary was complemented by readers and primers -colonial officials were encouraged to speak Fulfulde. At some point in the later colonial period both church and government turned away from Fulfulde. However, it is still used in the media in Adamawa and Taraba States -but Hausa is gradually expanding as the language of commerce, even in Yola town. The separate southern bloc represents the Mambila and Fali Plateaux which have substantial Fulɓe populations. North of the Plateau is the Gashaka-Gumpti Game Reserve, effectively devoid of settled populations.

Fulfulde is spoken along the Benue river north of Wukari but its limit is effectively the barely inhabited region further west (partly the Pai River Forest Reserve). Northwest of Yola there is an extension towards Gombe and it is effectively spoken in northern Gongola State as far as the limits of southern Borno State, where Kanuri takes over as a vehicular language.

5. Non-pastoral Communities using Fulfulde

Unlike Hausa, Fulfulde is a relatively rare choice for peoples in Nigeria who are in the process of exchanging their identity for that of a dominant group. However, two communities have been identified as exchanging their own language for Fulfulde -the Holma and the Wurbo (marked on Map 3).

Holma

The Holma people live north of Yola, near Sorau on the Cameroun border. They traditionally spoke a Chadic language related to Njanyi. They were first converted to Islam in the mid-nineteenth century and they have been progressively exchanging their language for Fulfulde. In 1987 there were only four old people who could still speak Holma with any fluency.

Wurbo

The Wurbo are one of the many subgroups of the Jukun peoples and they are occupationally specialised fishermen, discussed in Meek (1931). They live today on the tributaries of the Benue, especially the Taraba and the Donga. Some communities, especially those near Gassol have converted to Islam relatively recently and are in the process of switching to speaking Fulfulde.

6. Future prospects for Fulfulde in Nigeria

Although Fulfulde is one of the major languages of Nigeria and has officially been targeted for promotion, in reality it is everywhere in decline. The area where it is spoken as a vehicular language is gradually shrinking and it receives little or no investment in terms of educational materials, except in Adamawa State, where it is most common. Broadcasts on radio are restricted to the type of Hausa-influenced urban speech used in Yola and probably do not reach the majority of pastoralists. Churches no longer use Fulfulde in any context, even in Adamawa.

Nigeria has a well-funded programme of 'nomadic education' that is especially active in Sokoto and Plateau States. However, numbers of children attending these schools are relatively small (Ezeomah, 1987). Ironically, in Sokoto State, the Fulɓe themselves are gradually switching to Hausa; the Sulebawa and other groups are commonly known as 'Hausa'en' because they no longer speak Fulfulde.

7. Conclusion

One point this paper is intended to accentuate is that the distribution and importance of the languages of an essentially pastoral people such as the Fulɓe is constantly changing -both because the people themselves are on the move and because of language shifting. Thus, even if the map published by Stenning (1959) had been accurate at the time it would not reflect the current situation.

So this creates a paradox; during the same period as the people and language have colonised broad new regions of the subhumid and humid zones, the culture and language are effectively being swallowed up in the 'homeland' areas. This perhaps emphasizes the value of a dynamic approach to the understanding of pastoral culture and a constant monitoring of changes.

APPENDIX

An Alphabetic listing of Fulɓe clans (LeYYi) in Nigeria

This appendix lists alphabetically all the names of Fulɓe clans recorded during the survey. They are recorded in the form originally given. As some forms are Hausa, and others Fulfulde, I have attempted to normalise them all to a standard Fulfulde spelling. They have been compared to a comprehensive list for Cameroun prepared by Nelson and Na'ango (n.d.). After each name, I have given the place of origin of the group, where this is known. In some cases, informants' observations conflict with published or archival material; I have noted this as far as possible.

Akuji see Daneeji. Also Aku'en.
Anagamba. A distinctive group from Northern Borno and adjacent Niger Republic.
Autanko'en. A suudu of the Jaafun.
Ba'anko see Bawanko'en.
Ba'awa see Ba'en.
Ba'el see Ba'en.
Ba'en. One of the most widespread clans in Adamawa, mentioned by Barth, who travelled in this area in the 1850's as one of the original nomadic groups to reach Bornu in the pre-Jihad period.
Babanko'en.
Babbal.
Badumanko'en.
Barawanko'en. A group from the Barawa area south of Bauchi.
Bawanko'en. Perhaps an elided form of Barawanko'en (q.v.)
Be Girga.
Bewe'en
Bogoyanko'en. A lenyol.
Bokolooji. A common term for the Fulɓe herding Sokoto Gudali cattle. It remains unclear how far this is a generic term
BooDi. A lenyol that migrated from Kano via Bauchi and Zing.
Borkumanko'en.
Bornanko'en.
Bornawa. A Hausa term referring to all migrants from Bornu, in this case probably
to WoDaaBe.
Borno'en. A general term for Fulɓe from Borno
Bororo see Mbororo.
Butanko'en. A widespread group from Buta, near Ningi, northern Bauchi State.
Ciromanko'en.
Daayi
Dabanko'en. A suudu of the Badumanko'en.
Daga'en.
Daneeji. A large group named for the white long-horns it specialises in rearing. Their most recent homeland was between Kano and Katsina, and many individuals maintain strong residential ties with this area. The Daneeji only began to colonise the plateaux of the Shebshi range after 1975, although they have been present on the Mambila plateau since 1950.
Danyanko'en.
Dauranko'en. A group from Daura in Hausaland, a suudu of both the Gorkanko'en and the SiwalBe.
Degereeji. A WoDaaBe lenyol (Stenning, 1959:196 & Dupire, 1970:325).
Dindima'en.
Fa'aBe.
Faranko'en. A Jaafun lineage from Ngaundere. The name derives from the Faro river.
Fikaaji. A group that migrated from Fika town in northeast Central Nigeria.
Fulɓe Bamle.
Fulɓe Gok.
Galeeji. A lenyol.
Galooro.
Gamadanko'en. A lineage of the Jos Fulɓe.
Gamanko'en. A lenyol.
Garbanko'en.
Gerkanko'en.
Geroogi see Gerooji.
Gerooji. Also Gerewji. A lenyol.
Gezanko'en.
Gommanko'en.
Gorkanko'en. A lenyol.
Gudali. A general name for all groups from the Sokoto area herding the white gudali shorthorn cattle.
HorewalDe.
IBegiye.
Iloranko'en.
Isho'en.
Jaafun. Also Djafun, Jafun, Jaafun'en. The Jaafun claim to have come from Bauchi, but most of the groups in southern Gongola have come from northern Cameroun in the recent past. Many of the Lamidates of Adamawa were originally conquered by Jaafun, for example Ngaundere (Pfeffer, 1937).
JaawooBe.
Jallanko'en. A lenyol.
Jamnanko'en.
Jananko'en.
Jaranko'en. Probably an elided form of Jarawanko'en, a group from the Jarawa area south of Bauchi. A Jaafun lenyol.
Jawolawa.

Jo'oDi.
Kaceccere'en. A grouping established in Southern Zaria near Zonkwa. Apparently taken from a local population called Kachichere in Hausa.
Kamni Boggi.
Karawanko'en.
Katsinanko'en. Originally from Katsina.
Kawaaji
Kesu'en. One of the original nomadic groups to enter Adamawa in the pre-Jihad period (Webster, 1917). Originated from Kano, and migrated via Zing.
Kilba'en. A group from the Kilba area, near Hong in northern Gongola State.
Kiri'en. A sedentary lenyol of the Ba'en (Mohammadou, 1981:231).
Kitako'en.
Komanko'en.
Konanko'en. A suudu of the SiwalBe, presumably from Kona in Jukun country.
Majanko'en. A suudu of the Jaafun.
Malle. A group from Mali who migrated to the Mambila plateau in the 1960's.
Manganko'en. A group from Manga, near Panyam in Plateau State. A HusooBe lineage.
Manshara. A Hausa name applied to a Fulɓe section.
Mbororo, also Bororo. A general name applied by outsiders to all nomadic Fulɓe. The term is not used by the nomads themselves, who use either Fulɓe na'i or Fulɓe ladde.
Moodanko'en. A suudu of the SiwalBe.
Naadanko'en. A suudu of the SiwalBe.
Naatirbe. A lenyol.
Nabaaji.
Ngara'en.
Ningawa. A Hausa term applied to those coming from the Ningi area, a suudu of the WeweBBe.
Nordanko'en.
Perooji.
Pigaaji.
Raahaaji. A term applied to a lenyol specialised in the rearing of the 'red' longhorn, known as BoDeeji in the southern Gongola area.
Rimfanko'en. Also Rimpanko'en. A nickname given a suudu of the SiwalBe coming
from Kano.
Roogooji.
Saadamanko'en. A suudu of the SiwalBe.
Salanko'en.
SisilBe.
SiiwaalBe. Also SualBe. A nomadic lineage of the Ba'en, migrating from Zaria, via Bauchi and Zing. A lenyol with numerous suudu in this area.
Silanko'en
Sundurje.
TaniraaBe.
TorooBe.
Tubanko'en. A lenyol.
Tukanko'en.
Uda'en. A lenyol specialised in sheep- herding.
Ve've'be. also WeweBBe, WeweDBe, -a nomadic lineage of the Ba'en.
Wageeji. Also Waageeji. A suudu of the SiwalBe.
Wiiti. A common term applied to settled Fulɓe in the Ganye Region. The original Fulɓe Wiiti claim to have come from Gombe.
Wiya'en.
Wuuti see Wiiti.
WoDaaBe. The most widespread group of all, the WoDaaBe are dispersed from Mali to Sudan. They are divided into numerous lineages (leYYi). Most of the WoDaaBe remain nomadic, although they have settled sporadically in areas of southern Gongola.
Yaabaaji.
YaawooBe.
YilarBe.

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