



Historical assessment of the socio-economic and political activities of Fulani pastoralists in Yola, Adamawa-Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper studies different Fulani settlements in Yola area of Adamawa. Each settlement is made up of an extended family of an average of 20 or more people, related by blood or inter-marriages. The settlements are isolated and route links to the nearest host communities. It also examines the socio-economic and political activities of the Fulani settlers and their host communities. The paper seeks to understand the life of the pastoralists Fulani in Yola area especially as it relates to their social, economic and political patterns living in the area. Understanding this is huge significance to the body of knowledge and other purposes if any. Carrying research on this is crucial to find a lasting solution to objectives of the paper. The information of the study collected through primary and secondary methods of data collection which include oral interviews, archival records, journals/articles, newspapers, dissertations, books among others. The information gathered gave us sense of focus to discussion critically the theme of this study.

Keywords: Socio-economic, political, pastoralists, statements, Fulani and Yola

1. Introduction

The pastoralists Fulani today are found all over the country (i.e. Nigeria) especially in the northeast states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe. The Fulani in the Yola community of Adamawa state, northeastern Nigeria, are mostly migrants from neighbouring countries of Chad, Niger and Cameroon Republic. A small package of them come from Hausaland and Chad basin (Chubado, 2019) ^[12]. They mostly live in settlements far away from the host communities. The emergence of Fulani pastoralists in Yola dates back to 16th and 17th centuries (Catherine, 1985 and Chubado, 2019) ^[10, 12]. The men herds cattle and other livestock like sheep, goats, donkeys sometimes, beside this activity they are also engaged in crops cultivation or farming while their women produce and sell dairy products. Both men and women are attached entrepreneurial activities, some are involved in a combination of two or more economic activities. The Fulani clans in Yola area include the Bororo'en, Kiri'en, Uda'en, Jafun'en and Kitaku'en, etc. (Catherine, 1985) ^[10]. While they both speaks Fulfulde language but there are differences in dialects. This group of people are found in Wuro-Modibbo, Wuro-Sekke, Bamba, Yolde-Pate, Ngurore, Njoboli and Namtari, etc. all settlements around Yola region (An interviews with Aminu, 12/9/2020 and Buba, 7/1/2020) ^[7, 9].

The pastoralists Fulani of Nigeria shares similar characteristics with other pastoralists of the world in terms of their socio-economic and political activities moving from one place to another in search of fertile land, green pastures and fresh water for their cattle or livestock. These similarities are in footings of religious values and belief system and especially language among the Fulani, Shuwa, Hausa and Berbers and Arabs (Moses, 1986) ^[21]. The Fulani are generally believed to be the product of inter-marriage between the Berbers of North Africa and the people around the Senegal valley. As mentioned earlier, the Pastoralists are largely people who devoted their life in herding in large number moving from one place to another searching for green pasture and water for their cattle and other purposes. The pastoralists of Yola are in good example (Chubado, 2019) ^[12]. As indicated in the above paragraph, they engage in different socio-economic activities and depend on their cattle and dairy products such as milk and cheese which they sell to purchase foodstuff and other requirement.

Cows are used in paying dowries for marriages, settling disputes and they also slaughter cattle during festivals such as farming ceremonies, naming ceremonies, marriage ceremonies among others (Moses, 1986) ^[21].

However, efforts have been made by government at Federal, State and Local Government levels including Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) especially programmes of nomadic education in the state with assistance from Miyetti Allah Cattle Feeders Association, Jama'atul Nasirul Islam, etc. and international organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, World Bank among others. Series of seminars, workshops and conferences have been organized with the view of identifying problems of the pastoralists Fulani not only in Yola and Nigeria as a whole but little progress had been achieved (Moses, 1986 and Johnson, 1967) ^[21, 18]. Therefore, this study carried out for the purpose of coming up with lasting solution that affecting the pastoralists Fulani not only in Yola community but Nigeria as a whole.

Historical background of the Yola Fulani

Yola the headquarters of Adamawa derived its name from *Yolde* (Fulfulde language) meaning a flat land or rising ground for both farming, herding and other economic activities; the name described the region on which the city located. The city was founded by an Islamic scholar in person of *Modibbo* Adama ibn *Ardo* Hassan, a Fulani hero and leader of the Sokoto jihad of 1804 in *Fombina* emirate of Sokoto caliphate (Mahmoud, 1979) ^[20]. Before the establishment of Yola in 1841, *Modibbo* Adama had at different time since the outbreak of the jihad in the region in 1809 he used Gurin (1809-1830), Ribadu (1831-1839) and Njoboli (1840) as the emirate's bases for the execution of the 19th century Sokoto jihad in upper Benue valley. The reason (s) for choosing Yola as a capital of the emirate is uncertain but it is perceived that it might be because it was a place where Adama's parents settled in pre-jihad period or because of the good fertile land of the area (Chubado, 2019 and Ahmed, 1976) ^[12, 4].

The region is inhabited with various groups of people such as Bata, Laka and Verre while others include Chamba, Kilba, Margi, Boi and Kanuri, etc. these groups have established good cordial relations between them and the Fulani both settled and pastoralists of Yola and the state as a whole (Abubakar, 1976) ^[2]. The origin of Fulani pastoralists, just as that of the Hausa (the Bayajida legend), Yoruba (the Oduduwa legend), Nupe (Tsoede) and the Kanuri (Saif b. Dhi Yanan) were mere legends. Ugba ibn Nafi a historical personage was associated with the Arab conquest of North Africa during the early expansion of Islam. Perhaps, in the process of conquest they encountered with the Negro (black) people of the region, some of the Berbers were nomads and gradually inter-married with the Negro farmers and products of such unions may probably have been the Fulani. Moreover, the Senegal valley which the Berber nomads crossed from the north to pasture their herds. It was from the Senegal basin, the Fulani started to spread gradually eastwards within the Savanna belt of Africa and later into norther borders of the equatorial forest region free from the infestation of tse-tsefly (Abubakar, 1976 and Chubado, 2019) ^[2, 12].

In the course of migration, some of the Fulani abandoned pastoralism for either settled or semi-settled life. Fulani can be classified into three groups according to the degree of urbanization (Yakubu, 1997) ^[28]. They (Bororo'en) are completely pastoralists and continuously on the move without regard to a permanent home. This group fully

engages and continues in herding their cattle within and outside the region, they consider themselves as the only pure Fulani clan and stick to their nomadic life. The Fulani (Bororo'en) sees the other two Fulani sub-groups as 'degenerates whose culture is debased by inter-marriage relations with non-Fulani' (Yakubu, 1997 and Chubado, 2019) ^[28, 12].

By the 14th century, the search for new pastures had taken the Fulani from Futa Toro over a long period of time to Borno. After they spent some centuries under the influence and control of Borno (Saifawa Dynasty), a large number of them migrated to Adamawa region through the Kilange valley (Abba, 1988) ^[1]. As they went along, the migrants paid grazing dues to their various host communities. Sometimes, they worked for their hosts as herdsmen and obeyed all the laws and traditions of the societies they found themselves. The Fulani sub-groups came through the southern part of Borno in different stages over years. However, large number of them migrated in the last quarter of the 19th century due to the geographical and political reasons (Yakubu, 1997) ^[28]. They migrated from Senegal valley to Borno via Mandara and finally to the upper Benue valley especially in Yola area. These clans include the following: Bewe'en, Isso'en, Juba'en, Ngara'en, Bororo'en and Ba'en among others (NAK/Yolaprof/G2.Y, 1917). The Fulani migrations in the late 18th and early 19th centuries meet the Bata settlement of Bagale hills (Chubado, 2012) ^[13].

Origin and location of the pastoral fulani in Yola Area

The earliest centre of the Fulani in the western Sudan was within the Senegal basin. However, today the Fulani have spread eastwards to as far as the Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia, while in Nigeria they number in millions. There has been a matter of controversy as various scholars have advanced different theories to explain their emergence. Their own tradition, however, claims descents from the famous Arab, Ugba ibn Nafi as mention earlier. The Fulani who largely depend on their herds, also believe to have participated in Sokoto jihad of 1804 in Hausaland where certain of them settled in group known as the town Fulani (Fulbe Wuro) while the remaining with their nomadic way of life known as the cattle Fulani (Fulbe Na'i). The nomadic Fulani today are found all over Nigeria especially in the northeastern (Tarig, 2011) ^[25].

It is not easy to identify the areas where the pastoral Fulani are being found in Adamawa particularly in Yola. But settlements can be identified that include Wuro-Modibbo, Yolde-Pate, Chambaji, Ngurore, Namtari, Njoboli, Wuro-Chekke and Mbamba (An interviews with Aminu, 12/9/2020 and Buba, 7/1/2020) ^[7]. It is often agreed that pastoral Fulani lived in group of clans in a mobile bush encampment in which they were ready to either defend or flee depending on the strength of their enemy. They join what they want through peaceful mean; they also do not have land hence they move from one area to another at their convenience. The pastoralists have no permanent settlement since they are always in search of green pasture and water for their cattle and other livestock. The pastoralists found in Yola today, as a result of assistance from government and non-governmental organizations of both national and international organizations who provide them with necessary needs such as schools, dispensaries, healthcare centres, veterinary clinics, dams, grazing areas, cattle routes and markets for their daily activities (Kirk-Greene, 1969) ^[19].

Political organization of the Pastoralists Fulani in Yola

Politically, the pastoralists Fulani of Yola area were headed by a leader called *Ardo* (kindred leader). *Ardo* (*Ardo'en*; *Fulfulde* plural) is directly or indirectly answerable to Village Head called *Lawan*; and he (*Lawan*) are under the influence of the District Head who are answerable to the *Lamido* for daily activities of their respective district (NAK/Yolaprof/Acc.77, 1956). Therefore, *Ardo* is responsible for settling disputes among pastoralists Fulani in their respective statements, for example, *Ardo'en* settle cases of land disputes, marriages, divorce and even criminal acts and he is also responsible to oversee cattle routes with the collaboration of *Sarkin* Shanu which contributed and gives peaceful living between herders and farmers respectively in area. But in a situation where a case is above the supremacy of *Ardo'en*, they referred it to Village Head who in turn settles the dispute. However, if the matter is beyond the authority of Village Head, it is his duty to take such case to District Head for settling of the issue and gives it a final judgment or transfer such case to the *Lamido*, if there is need of that (An Interviewed with Umaru, 3/8/2020). Furthermore, *Ardo'en* were also responsible for collecting revenues, dues or taxes (*jangali* or *jomorgol*) and *zakat* with the authority of Village Head for District Head and *Lamido* respectively. They also communicate the views and voice of *Lamido* to their subjects (Zayyad, 2009) ^[29].

Usually in the area, the *Ardo'en* are approached with complaints or cases from different individuals, sometimes from their relatives and when such cases were reported, they would ensure reconciliation of such cases. But if they could not reconcile them, they would eventually transfer such cases to the higher authority. These are the ways of settling social disputes among the pastoralist Fulani in the area. The *Ardo'en* play an essential role in overseeing the affairs of the area. They know every single individual in their areas and have detailed knowledge of their movements. They also, know the location of all farm lands and grazing grounds and; have detailed knowledge of the number of wives, children and their ages which a particular person has within their statements. Furthermore, they have depth knowledge of the number of herds of cattle and flock of sheep, goats, donkeys a particular person owns or possessed (Zayyad, 2009 and Henring, 1993) ^[29], ^[16].

Thus, with this detailed knowledge of their areas, security of the place is guaranteed. Other duties of the *Ardo'en* are to report movements of strangers with a view of preventing the citizens from thieves and other criminals. They also report immediately the occurrence of violence, deaths and any outbreak of human or animal diseases as well as any unusual movements of livestock and game (hunting). They are even expected regularly to report the sighting of the new moon and supervised by the Village Head who receive directives from District Head and *Lamido*. In general, they play an active role in organizing and implementing socio-political and economic activities in their respective domains (Zayyad, 2009) ^[29].

The *Ardo'en*, Village Head and District Head superior is the *Lamido's* on-spot agent (An Interviewed with Umaru, 3/8/2020). The *Ardo'en* functions not only to make performance on coordination, but also to ensure that all the activities of the government are carried out according to laid down policies. They are in charge to report on all aspects of life in their respective areas, the condition of crops on the farms to self-help efforts, availability or scarcity of water or food and the conditions of various roads or trade routes to the

Lamido (An Interviewed with Umaru, 3/8/2020).

Socio-Economic Activities of the Pastoralists Fulani in Yola

Pastoralism predominantly practiced and undertaken by large number of pastoral, Shuwa, Koyam and Fulani in the northern part of Nigeria. But Fulani are champion and leading group in the system of pastoralism. They move from place to place in search of good pasture and water for their cattle, especially in the dry season (Anyanwu, 1997). The next economic activity to farming among the people of Yola area was the keeping of livestock, primarily cattle. Cattle in great numbers are owned by the Fulani, who bred and kept their cattle under range conditions (Chubado, 2012) ^[13]. The nomadic Fulani were basically dependent on their possession of sufficient cattle. Children of both sexes from the age of seven to eight were involved in herding livestock, while the women-folk marketed the bovine products and built huts when they migrated. (Chubado, 2012) ^[13]. Therefore, head of a family was respected by his children and the wider community according to the size of his herds. The elders among the pastoralists Fulani were acquainted with the knowledge of cattle diseases and they were said to prepare indigenous medicine using herbs for their livestock. The young herders were responsible for mapping and surveying tracks and places to pass through during their seasonal movements (An interviewed Buba, 7/1/2020) ^[9]. Thus, the males were primarily responsible for providing grazing pastures and security to the people under their influence from being raided either by thieves or wild animals such as lion, tiger, hyena, etc. (An interviewed Buba, 7/1/2020) ^[9].

Among the pastoralists Fulani, women do the milking or dairy farming. The daily work was in the hands of women, to sour the milk, prepare the milk and butter, and they take such products to town and villages or markets of a considerable distance. After milking, the milk is set aside for souring which occurs naturally in hot weather, but in cold weather is assisted by first swelling the calabashes used for the souring process with a little of the previous day's sour butter-milk put for the purpose. Apart from cattle, a substantial number of goats and sheep were also kept, but they were not as important as cattle in the socio-economic development of the area (An interviewed Buba, 7/1/2020) ^[9].

Therefore, cattle are asset which most owners kept as a major form of property. There were people who owned over ten (10) herds of cattle (Chubado, 2012) ^[13]. Owners often desist from selling their cattle except when it was absolutely necessary. Apart from providing social security to its owners, the economic importance of cattle centred around the provision of meat, skins and milk in form of fresh milk, yoghurt, butter and cheese as well as providing local manure and to fertile the farm lands. In general, it provides means of livelihood to the owners and humanity as a whole (Alkasum, 2003) ^[6].

Slaughtering of cattle by the pastoralists Fulani in Yola area was not an everyday affair, except during market days where people from various villages converged in one location for the purposes of socio-economic reasons. Both sheep and goats were mostly kept at home except in the case of large herds. They were either reared separately or combined with cattle. Sheep rearing in particular, assumed more significant position in the area because rams replaced cattle as the main animal slaughtered during religious (sacrifices) ceremonies such as naming and the sacrifice feast/feats of the sacrifice (*Id-El-Kabir*) (Alkasum, 2003 and Falola, 2001) ^[14]. The

rearing of livestock was a commercial source of satisfying immediate needs and employment in Yola area. Therefore, cattle breeders are basically pastoralists Fulani, settled Fulani and supplemented by other groups in the area (An interviewed Buba, 7/1/2020) ^[9]. The ownership of cattle began at birth, usually as gift (*sukkilol*) from relatives and this emphasizes the importance of cattle in the society. The *sukkilol* would be repeated on important occasions, during the celebrations of naming ceremony, after graduation from *Qur'anic* school and during marriage ceremony (Falola, 2001) ^[14].

Consequently, the methods of breeding of livestock in Yola area are in two seasons; rainy and dry seasons. During the rainy season or the fertile period of the year, a large number of pastoralists congregate themselves in a pasture land generally known as *shetinol* and *dabbol* (in Fulfulde language). Moreover, they spend at least about two to three months there before returning or moving forward to other places for breeding their cattle. This was done for cattle, while the sheep and goats at that period would be provided with a boy or girl that would take care and prevent them from entering farms and gardens. Therefore, this is the continuous process till the rainy season ends. He or she takes them away in the morning and brought them back in the evening. While in dry season, the other alternative method of rearing livestock was adopted, like getting the dried stocks of groundnuts, beans, guineacorn, maize which is known as *mbafu* and *hako biriji* or *nyebbe* in Fulfulde language, these contain a lot of vitamins that would be given to the animals in order to breed them (An interviewed Buba, 7/1/2020) ^[9].

The complimentary relationship between herders on one hand, farmers and other artisans on the other was often cordial in Yola area (An interviewed with Aminu, 12/9/2020) ^[7]. Beside Fulani pastoralists, other groups in Yola area engaged in livestock keeping and rearing. The idea of pastoralism was an essential form of production to farmers and other artisans in the area. Also, some among the other groups kept animals for domestic use. Indeed, donkeys have been dear to peasant farmers who engaged them in transporting back home products produced or cultivated in their different farms and fetching water for domestic use (Henring, 1993) ^[16]. Even traders among the pastoralists Fulani in Yola area also relied on donkeys for transporting their goods to market fields and other purposes (An interviewed with Aminu, 12/9/2020) ^[7].

Culture of the Fulani Pastoralists in Yola

Among the inhabitants of the area, pastoralists Fulani also have their cultural traits which they inherit from their ancestors. For instance, the concept of *pulaku* which means tradition, behaviour and beliefs are very important to the pastoralists; it addresses relationship, dress, ceremonies, language, housing and occupation. *Pulaku* has three main components: *Hakkilo*, *Munyal* and *Semtende*. These words differ in simple interpretation but can basically be defined as wisdom, knowledge, patience, endurance and modesty (Catherine, 1985) ^[10].

Hakkilo is basically a body of knowledge and behaviour that describes Fulani esteem or respect. It is also a unifying agent in the Fulani culture, where wisdom is glorified (Aniago, 1999) ^[8]. *Munyal* can roughly be characterized as patience and endurance, Fulani believes that individuals should be reserve and control their emotions (Aniago, 1999) ^[8]. A Fulani sees patience as a very important attribute. Rashness

is seen as a character flaw; it is very rare to see a Fulani displaying anxiety, affection, anger, fear or pain in public. *Semtende* is one of the most distinct traits of Fulani life and it can be roughly considered as reserve, but it is more close to shyness. Most cultures use shyness as a way to control their members. *Semtende* can refer to modesty particularly in relation to members of the different age class. The most prominent relationship that *semende* affects is spouses where a married woman should never mention the name of her husband and even if there is another person by the same name she is forbidden to call him by his name and names of in-law and first born child. They will sit on separate mats, eat separately, travel independently and not approach each other in public settings. Fulani often will not directly say the name of their spouses (An interviewed Buba, 7/1/2020) ^[9].

Soro is another Fulani culture observes annually by the pastoralists Fulani and is also an age of initiation relating marriage among the Fulani especially pastoralists (Chubado, 2012 and Femi, 2014) ^[13, 15]. It involves severe thrashings with specially prepared supple sticks in order to taste the *munyal* of youths who want to demonstrate to the public that they are adults and legible to marry. During the ceremony, marriageable girls form a circle around space chosen for this purpose while spectators stand behind them. A challenger moved to a centre of circle, there is drumming and singing to signal the beginning of the ceremony. He raises his arms to expose his ribs to the heavy blows of a taster. The challenger accompanied by his relatives and friends who encourage him during the public flogging (Femi, 2014; Philomina, 2012 and Chubado, 2019) ^[15, 26, 12]. The young taster is always of actual strength to the challenger and has to come from a different family. In most cases, a Fulani is not considered a true Fulani unless he participated in this show of strength. The challenger should not show any sign of pain least he earns public contempt and rejection by the ladies. In a return match, a challenger is given the opportunity for revenge when he becomes the striker (NAK/Yolaprof/File No. J.2, 1928). Participants are free to choose partners at the end of the festivals; and during this period, dances are held mainly for young pastoralists Fulani of both sexes. Most public flogging is carried out in a prominent location like a market place and open field (An interviewed Buba, 7/1/2020) ^[9]. Although, the pastoralists Fulani consider this activity to be very significant while the settled Fulani in Yola area does not recognize it because of the un-Islamic practices embodied in it (An interviewed Buba, 7/1/2020) ^[9].

They also believe in marriage between close relative as they think it is good to retain their family blood. A lady (girl) is often given to a man (husband) of her parent's choice at an early age. A man usually boy often has to undergo a ceremony of public flogging, called *soro* before he is considered worthy of a bride. Marriage ceremonies are elaborate occasions involving the presentation of many gifts and husband receives more cattle from his parent, relatives and family friends to support his family (Femi, 2014 and Abubakar, 2008) ^[15, 3]. Moreover, livestock are so special in Yola area, the pastoralists Fulani has a tradition of giving which is generally known as *habbanaye* or *shukkilol* (gift) that is, a cow, sheep or goat is loaned to another person until she-calves and the cow is returned to its owner. This *habbanaye* is a highly prized and respected animal. After receiving this gift, the *habbanaye* is given a name (Abubakar, 2008) ^[3].

Conclusion

From foregoing discussion, the paper provides background knowledge on social, economic and political activities of the pastoralists Fulani statements in Yola area whereby it examines the socio-economic and political development of the pastoralists statements in Yola. It also looks at the origin and movements of the pastoralists into the study area. The cultural and political organization of the pastoralists were also highlighted categorically in this paper. The pastoralists provide the people of Yola and their neighbours with the means of livelihood. The cattle rearing was made possible in the area because of the availability of pasture, water and absence of tsetse fly due to the open plain and nature of the environment for husbandry. As stated earlier, pastoralism is mainly a pre-occupation of the pastoralists Fulani who usually owned large herds of cattle and moved from one place to another in search of pasture and water for their cattle (or livestock).

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