

Bororo Fulani Pastoralists and Yoruba Farmers' Conflicts in the Upper Ogun River, Oyo State Nigeria, 1986–2004

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Abstract

This article, based on in-depth oral interviews, focuses on the conflicts between Bororo Fulani pastoralists and Yoruba farmers in Saki and Iseyin towns of the Upper Ogun River (*Oke-Ogun*), Oyo State Nigeria to show the power disparity and competition over land resources. The conflicts that occurred between Bororo Fulani pastoralists and Yoruba farmers are classified as: economic (crop destruction and cattle killing); social (murder, rape, armed banditry, molestation on both sides of the conflict); and communal (large-scale destruction of villages, pastoral settlements and markets). Other conflicts involved access to grazing and water resources and access to markets. These conflicts were products of resource scarcity and broader challenges of power relations between indigenes and settlers/migrants in Nigeria. Ethnicity became more conspicuous among local people as these conflicts intensified. This article discusses the intervention of Yoruba traditional rulers (*Oba*) and Fulani headman (*Ardo*) in the formation of peace committees in Iseyin and Saki towns.

Keywords

Bororo Fulani, conflict, farmers, pastoralists, Yoruba

Introduction

This article accounts for the perennial clashes in the contest over access to diminishing land resources, destruction of crops and farmlands between farmers and pastoralists. Many conflicts occurred between Bororo Fulani pastoralists and Yoruba farmers, classified as economic (crop destruction and cattle killing), social (murder, rape, armed banditry, molestation on both sides of the conflict), and communal (large-scale destruction of villages, pastoral settlements and markets). Other conflicts involved access to grazing- and water-resources and access to markets. Moritz (2006: 6) submits that it is not competition for land in general that is responsible for farmer–pastoralist conflicts, but the competition for key resources critical for the sustainability of pastoral

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and agricultural production systems, such as watering areas and fertile land. Thus, the competition between farmers and pastoralists over access to landed resources could be seen as a competition between two different production systems: agriculture and pastoralism (Moritz, 2006: 6).

These conflicts were also products of broader challenges of power relations between indigenes and settlers in Nigeria. Ethnicity became conspicuous among local people as these conflicts intensified. In this context, the ethnic dimension of farmer and pastoralist conflicts cannot be ignored. For Moritz (2006: 10), farmer and pastoralist conflicts are outcomes of competition between different sociocultural or ethnic groups. As such, conflicts between farmers and pastoralists become more complex.

Inter-ethnic relations between Fulani pastoralists and Yoruba farmers have endured for centuries. Land use in Saki and Iseyin towns was extensive, and sharing of land resources between agriculturalists and pastoralists was customary since the 15th century AD. Due to the centrality of agriculture to the rural economy, land and land resources are crucial to the reproduction of social and economic life (Egwu, 1998: 16). The Fulani, as an economic unit, constitute one of the oldest migrant groups among the Yoruba. In the 1850s William Clarke noted among the Upper Ogun communities 'a small collection of Fulani houses occupied by these native shepherds who are people within a people, distinct and alone...' (Atanda, 1972 :70). In the 1960s the growing migration of Fulani produced semi-permanent Fulani settlements whose leaders spoke Yoruba and mediated diplomacy with the host communities over trampled crops and farmlands (Guyer, 1997: 59). Some wealthy Yoruba invested in cattle that they placed in trust of the Fulani herders. However, simmering tension was already recorded in the conflicts over destruction of crops by cattle herds.

The Fulani became a significant part of the states in the entire southwestern Nigeria (Adebayo, 1997: 108). Though competition existed, a profound commercial network existed between Hausa, Yoruba and Fulani as cattle traders. The two economic groups profited from each other's livelihood. There was economic symbiosis between the Fulani and Yoruba. Fulani women produced and sold (*wara*) cheese, the manure from cattle was a cheaper source of fertilizer for farmers, and most of the settled Fulani spoke Yoruba and socialized in the markets. The settled Fulani were influenced by Yoruba culture and western technology (Adebayo, 1997: 106). Many built houses with corrugated iron sheets, acquired motorcycles for transportation and electronic gadgets for entertainment (Adebayo, 1997: 106).

Yoruba farmers witnessed a shift in the identity of the Fulani herders composed of the settled Fulani and the Bororo Fulani who were more volatile, non-Yoruba speaking and quick to resort to violence. According to Guyer:

Negotiation took non-verbal forms when the herdboys behaved as if they did not understand the angry shouting of a farmer trying to head off the steady march or the aimless meandering of a dozen cows right through his planted crops. People said that there were murders over cattle disputes, and farmers quickly discovered that the only effective way to drive the herders out of specific regions was surreptitiously to poison a cow or two. (Guyer, 1997: 61)

As Tonah (2002: 45) suggests, almost everywhere in West Africa, the newly arrived Fulani pastoralists and their families are regarded as strangers and migrants.

From the early 1960s conflicts over grazing rights occurred between pastoralists and farmers in some parts of northern Nigeria, which accelerated with the drought of the 1970s (Ahmed, nd). The drought and conflicts pushed Fulani migration southwards in search of pasture and water for cattle herds. Massive migration of Fulani herders towards the southern pastures followed the Sahel drought and search for southernmost pastures close to the market (Guyer, 1997: 61). In the early 1970s, drought caused high mortality rates (an estimated 30–50%) among cattle herds (Adegbeye,

1978: 53). In southwestern Nigeria, the establishment of cattle ranches did not curb the high mortality among cattle herds. The drought of the 1970s spurred the migration of more aggressive Bororo Fulani who permanently settled among the Yoruba. Relationships became more hostile than in the past. In addition to cattle destruction of crops, Fulani herders were alleged to have engaged in double dealing with the Yoruba chiefs who entrusted them with cattle:

One prominent Yoruba chief had his entire Fulani-guarded herd of at least 20 heads simply walk off one day along the trails into the more distant savannas. Regularly, the Yoruba-owned cattle in the herds meet with unfortunate 'accidents' such as snake-bites. (Guyer, 1997: 61)

Bororo Fulani migration further created a vicious circle of conflicts over dwindling natural resources.

Transhumance pastoralism rather than a nomadism pattern of grazing is profoundly practiced among the Fulani in Iseyin and Saki. Compared to the northern zone, the area has limited cattle population due to tsetse fly infestation. The most popular animals are trypano-tolerant breeds, especially N'dama, Zebu, Keteku and Mutunu cattle, and sheep and goats. In order to ensure the continuous production of beef in Oyo State, the government established a cattle ranch at Fasola near Oyo town (Udo and Mamman, 1993: 400). The old grazing reserve at Oyo road set up by the defunct Western Region Government in the 1950s was abandoned by the Fulani on the basis that it was too far from Iseyin town.

The deplorable state of grazing reserves, due to poor management, led to competition for land between farmers and pastoralists. Most of the grazing reserves were established during the colonial era and without proper management. Indeed, the establishment of grazing reserves did not achieve its set goals of attracting transhumant pastoralists to adopt sedentarized culture.

Even though the Bororo Fulani were often accused of being the aggressors in the conflicts, the fundamental factors in the crises could be attributed to diminishing land and water resources for farming and grazing despite the growing population. Water scarcity contributed to the conflicts. Major water and dam projects collapsed due to poor management and lack of funds. Pressure on land accentuated by rapid urbanization, illegal mining and the rise of large-scale farms as well as the collapse of grazing reserves denied farmers and pastoralists the prospects of peaceful cohabitation.

There are interlocking factors of conflicts over grazing rights and farmlands: conflicts arise from competition over cattle markets and hiccups of compensation, as well as the rise of armed banditry and other social crimes. Bororo Fulani were accused of perpetrating atrocities against Yoruba hosts. Bororo Fulani youths were accused of rape cases and molestation of Yoruba ladies as well as armed banditry. It was further alleged that Bororo Fulani robbed their town Fulani kinsmen of the proceeds from sales of cattle (Bamgbose, 2002: 19). These crimes, though not associated with conflict over grazing issues, provoked the resentment of the Yoruba against the Bororo Fulani whom they considered as perpetrators of crime, violence and pervasive insecurity in their midst. Many Yoruba were allegedly injured and lost their money and properties (Ogunsanya and Popoola, 2000: 87). In most cases, community vigilante groups arrested the Bororo Fulani perpetrating crimes on the highways and handed them over to the police.

The criminal tendencies escalated the prospects for conflicts. The mutual trust between Fulani and Yoruba was systematically disappearing as Bororo Fulani often reported that the cow kept in custody by the Yoruba disappeared, was killed by snakes or crushed by vehicles. This type of case brought mistrust in commercial transactions and peaceful cohabitation.

There was competition as Yoruba accused Bororo Fulani of destroying their farms and monopolizing the cattle market. Indeed, conflict over the control of markets was abounding in Nigeria

between migrants and the host community. An example of this was the periodic conflict between Yoruba and Hausa traders at the Mile 12 Yam Market in Lagos.

Before the mid-1980s the conflicts were minor in scope and frequency as they were minimized through the intervention of Fulani *Ardo*. By the middle of the 1980s violent conflicts had occurred in all the pastoral corridors of Nigeria prompted by the deepening economic crisis. Since early 1990s the emergence of a new class of militant pastoralists, particularly the Bororo and Bokoloji, introduced a violent and fatal dimension to the conflicts (Ingawa et al., 1999: 10). Bororo Fulani often used underage shepherds who in their bid to feed their livestock destroyed the farmlands and crops of the Yoruba farmers.

There exists a sharp cultural distinction in the disposition of the Yoruba farmers and Fulani pastoralists to the issue of land. Bororo Fulani considered land, pasture and water as God-given, free resources in which they and their animals should have unlimited access (Ingawa et al., 1999: 6). Unlike the town Fulani, the Bororo Fulani often graze their cattle without prior announcement or negotiation with the traditional authorities or landowners. Deeper misunderstandings ensued when the Bororo Fulani declined to follow traditional patterns of negotiation with the local landlords and authorities before cattle grazing and worst still setting of temporary camps (Adebayo, 1997: 104). The Bororo Fulani do not pay traditional homage or notify the traditional authorities of their arrival and permission to graze their cattle. The migrant Bororo Fulani have little consideration for social exclusion imposed by either international boundaries or state creation. There were communication and language barriers, which inevitably paved the way for spreading of speculations and escalated mistrust. The conflict over grazing and farm lands rekindled old sentiments and friction the Yoruba harboured against Fulani since the 19th century Jihad that ravaged the northern parts of Yorubaland.

The judicial regime was pervasively corrupt which worsened the conflict situation. The apparently weak and corrupt judicial mechanism was indisposed to prevent the escalation of the conflicts. In addition, conflict resolution mechanisms were protracted, truncated and denied. Bororo Fulani destroyed farmlands belonging to Yoruba but escaped prosecution with impunity due to police protection. The police allegedly collected bribes from both Yoruba farmers and Fulani pastoralists in the conflicts. Most Yoruba farmers lost confidence in the police and traditional judiciary system. According to Adebayo, 'The Yoruba farmers felt that neither the traditional authority nor the police could deal with the Fulani. They described the Fulani as "government wards" who could not be disciplined' (Adebayo, 1997: 106). There was rampant disregard for law and order. In one instance, the agitation over the destruction of farmland by cattle led to the incarceration of a Yoruba farmer by the police sympathetic to the Fulani pastoralists. The Yoruba was denied bail and was detained like a hardened criminal. He eventually died while in detention (Oguntayo, 2005: 16). This signalled the rise of a repressive mode of conflict intervention through violence.

Ethnicity has increased in salience among local people as these conflicts intensified. Conflicts over land resources during the economic crisis prompted organized and militarized ethnic identities that escalated such conflicts. In their desperation, Yoruba farmers often mobilize local hunters and the militant Odu'a People's Congress (OPC), an ethnic militia, to obtain their compensation from Bororo Fulani pastoralists. The Yoruba reverted to a pervasive form of justice through the use of *Oro* traditional rituals.

On the other hand, Hausa and Fulani who settled among Yoruba as cattle traders often supported the Bororo Fulani in the ensuing violent conflicts in which lethal weapons were displayed to address perceived injustices. Evidence from other parts of Nigeria including Tula, Dadiya and the Filiya areas of Gombe State shows that Fulani often hired foreign mercenaries (Ogunsanya and Poola, 2000: 87).

The militant Bororo Fulani pastoralists embarked on nocturnal attacks and formation non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and trade guilds to defend their interests. The Miyetti Allah Cattle-Breeders Association (MACBAN) was set up in 1970 to protect Fulbe interests especially in the problems associated with land tenure and conflicts with crop farmers. (Fulani associations include Pastoralists Resolve (PARE), Mobgal-Fulbe Development Association and Fulbe Development Association of Nigeria [FULDAN].) The involvement of the OPC and use of lethal weapons led to the exodus of the Bororo Fulani from Iseyin.

Adebayo (1997) in his study of Fulani in Iwo town, southwestern Nigeria, observes that the clashes between farmers and pastoralists had no link with the dimension of national politics in Nigeria. However, evidence from the Upper Ogun River area suggests that the intervention of some local politicians and godfathers during the military era inadvertently aggravated the aggression of the Fulani pastoralists against the Yoruba farmers. Many farmers were incarcerated without due backing of the law and were denied justice. Indeed, conflict between Yoruba farmers and Bororo Fulani pastoralists endured due to its politicization by the power elite. For example, Alhaji Haruna Maiyasin Katsina, the Sarkin Sasa (Head of Hausa community), Ibadan, used his connection in the corridor of power during the military administration of late General Sanni Abacha to detain aggrieved Yoruba farmers who sought compensation for destroyed farm crops from Bororo Fulani pastoralists.

The Bororo Fulani destroyed farms with impunity and became violent towards Yoruba farmers. In 1998, after the demise of General Abacha, Yoruba farmers violently resisted the aggression of the Bororo Fulani (Albert, 2002). In October 2000 the visit of the delegation of the Arewa (northern) Consultative Forum to the Oyo State government triggered off Bororo Fulani's violent attack on farming communities in Saki. The conflicts between farmers and pastoralists were interpreted in ethnic terms rather than considering it as ripple effects of development quagmire. Indeed, the Joint Consultative Council of Fulani Chiefs in the southwest alleged discrimination against them and their children in education, healthcare and political appointments in spite of their contribution to the economy (Ogungbola, 2005: 1–2).

The clashes were also associated with cross-border issues. Most of the Bororo Fulani herders migrated from neighbouring countries without valid permission, and in effect attack resident farmers with lethal weapons including guns. The conflicts resulted in the loss of lives and livestock and the destruction of farmlands and produce.

Yoruba traditional rulers (*Oba*) and Fulani headman (*Ardo*) intervened in the formation of peace committees in Iseyin and Saki towns of Upper Oke-Ogun area of Oyo State, Nigeria. Complex cases of conflicts were often referred to the Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC) in the area. The PCRC comprises of the Yoruba traditional chiefs, the Fulani *Ardo* and the police. Out of all the cases handled by the PCRC only Etambo Jare (Fulani) versus a Yoruba farmer which occurred in 2003 was referred to the court. The Fulani *Ardo* confirmed that, despite being Yoruba, traditional authorities and the police usually play mediating role during conflicts.¹ However, Yoruba farmers alleged that wealthy Fulani created organizations with powerful influence both in government and the police which made Bororo Fulani evade justice whenever farmers demanded for compensation on damaged farms.² This complicates the negotiation process.

Beyond the peace initiatives of traditional authorities, police and community-based organizations, the internecine conflicts between farmers and Bororo Fulani herders attracted the intervention of international NGOs. Following the October 2000 conflicts, the United States Agency for International Aid (USAID)/ Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) set up a pilot programme on conflict prevention and mitigation for the Fulani and Yoruba in the *Oke-Ogun* communities of Oyo State. An inter-ethnic peace committee of 20 members was formed. Members comprised of

traditional rulers, police and the state security service. The committee met monthly and the local governments in the area planned to continue funding it in order to ensure it was institutionalized.

Research Area

The research area comprises Saki and Iseyin towns in Oyo State, Nigeria. Iseyin and Saki towns are located in the *Oke-Ogun* area (north bank of Ogun River), the ancient site of the old Oyo empire in the pre-colonial history of the Yoruba. The distance from Iseyin to Saki is about 100km, about three to four hours' journey by road, which is in a poor state. In order to provide effective transportation, the Moniya-Ijaiye-Iseyin-Igboora-Igangan roads were constructed under the World Bank Assisted Multi-State Road Project. The primary occupation in rural Oyo State is farming. In Saki and Iseyin towns, the predominant arable cropping systems are yam, cassava, rice, legumes, vegetables and maize. The vegetation of the Upper River Ogun is largely savannah grassland suitable for rearing cattle.

Iseyin Town

According to the 2006 census, the population of Iseyin, the headquarter of Iseyin local government, was 255,619. Iseyin has several commercial farm settlements and private agricultural projects. Many farmers were displaced from their farms by the large-scale agricultural projects; farmers either served as paid workers on the farms or constrained to cultivate small plots of land that yield little income.³

According to the king of Iseyin, His Royal Highness Oba Ganiyu Adebayo Alobalowo II, the Aseyin of Iseyin, Fulani migration to Iseyin began in the 18th century. Three categories of Fulani lived in Iseyin: Bangu Fulani from Benin Republic and Sokoto Fulani and Bororo Fulani from Katsina, Nigeria. The Bororo Fulani are those who graze their cattle all around and mostly live in secluded huts in the villages. They do not live in the town like the first two who settled among the Yoruba host community.⁴ Their impact was often felt in the town during festivities and celebrations that demanded cows. There were intermarriages between Hausa, Yoruba and Fulani. The Fulani live within the town and are concentrated largely at the *Kara* (the cattle market) along Saki road in Iseyin. The offices of the Fulani *Ardo* and *Sarkin* Hausa are located at the *Kara*. The *Kara* land was granted to the Hausa and Fulani in Iseyin by the late King, *Oba Adeyemi*.⁵ Fulani contributed to the commercial development of the town. They established their own market known at Olepate where they sold manufactured items and household utensils but which is patronized by all the ethnic groups in the community. According to Alhaji Jiga, a Fulani leader:

We cannot compare Iseyin with other places we have been. The land of Iseyin is suitable for our cattle and the people of Iseyin are nice to us. As far as I'm concerned there is no other place for me to go except my future generation decides to leave on their own.⁶

Bororo Fulani pastoralists live in the rural areas in makeshift settlements which enabled them to evade justice after committing havoc on the farms. They were often intercepted through the seizure of their cattle.

There are two grazing reserves in Iseyin which the Fulani considered not suitable due to their distance. More cogently, the idea of grazing reserves is alien to the Bororo Fulani who resent being restricted to one specific place. Grazing reserves were considered an affront to their nomadic culture. The grazing reserves include Ejjo grazing reserve on Iganna road at Aiyedun and Igbeti grazing reserve at Igbeti near Iseyin.

The major factor for conflict between Fulani pastoralists and Yoruba farmers was identified as the incursion of cattle onto farms which destroyed either planted or harvested crops. It was alleged that the Fulani often graze their animals over the farm which causes destruction of farmland. Fulani herd boys often allowed cattle to graze farms causing havoc on planted and harvested crops.⁷ Fulani boys were contracted to graze at least 25 to 30 cattle. The boys rear the cattle for at least five months and in return receive a cow and a specific amount of money determined by the individual owners.⁸ The Fulani often revolted and further provoked the farmers when the cases were reported. This usually led to conflicts.⁹ The conflicts generally occurred during the dry season between the months of October and April when water was scarce and the animals did not get wet leaves to feed on.

In order to feed the animals and nourish them to survive, Fulani pastoralists allegedly uproot cassava, yam and other crops planted by the farmers. They also feed on maize and guinea corn. In some cases, Fulani pastoralist set forests and farms with cash crops such as cocoa and orange trees ablaze in order to allow new grasses to grow for the purpose of feeding the cattle. In 1998 a group of Bororo Fulani expelled from Oyo town migrated to Iseyin and caused more havoc to farmers.¹⁰ They were alleged to be aggressive in nature and never felt remorse after their cattle destroyed farms.

In 2001 a Yoruba boy was murdered by the Fulani pastoralists over the case of farm incursion by cattle. Yoruba youths mobilized themselves and attacked the *Kara* (the Hausa and Fulani cattle market). The conflict led to the intervention of the *Oba* and the Fulani *Ardo* (head of Fulani) which led to the formation of the peace committee which included: Chief Mosudi Salami, the Baale Ladogan; Chief Abegunde, the Baale Oke-eyin; Chief SO Shiyabola, the Jagun of Koso Iseyin; and the Fulani *Ardo*. The *Ardo* assisted the committee to identify the accused Bororo Fulani whose cattle destroyed farms. The committee inspected the farm and quantified the value of the damage to enable the pastoralist to compensate the farmer. Composite cases were referred to the police or the newly initiated PCRC Iseyin.¹¹ The PCRC comprises of the Yoruba traditional chiefs, the Fulani *Ardo* and the police.¹² However, Yoruba farmers alleged that the Fulani often bribe the police and the traditional ruler to deny them justice and compensation for their farms destroyed by the cattle. Administration of justice was protracted, truncated and often denied. They reverted to pervasive forms of justice by forming the local wing of the OPC. In the event of conflicts between farmers and the Fulani, the OPC were mobilized to unleash violence on the latter through the use of arms and the *oro* traditional ritual.

The rise of armed banditry in the area has been associated with the Bororo Fulani who violently stole the cattle of their settled Fulani folks, raped women, waylaid and killed traders.¹³ In 2003 the flippancy with which the *Oba* of Iseyin treated the menace of armed banditry provoked an uprising in the town led by the youths. Rampaging youths went berserk and torched the king's palace who was accused of aiding the scourge. In early 2005 a five-member Bororo Fulani armed band that had terrorized many routes in Oke-Ogun region of Oyo State was arrested by the police. During interrogation, the bandits (including Shehu Mallam, 27; Mohammed Dauda, 30; Abubakar Usman and Hassan Umaru) confessed that they had been robbing, raping and maiming unsuspecting travellers in Igboho, Komu and Ago-Are/Saki. Items recovered from them included one single barrel gun and one live cartridge (Omole, 2005: 13). This further influenced the formation of the local wing of OPC to provide community policing and vigilante services in the town.

In Iwoye, a border town between Nigeria and Benin Republic, in Ogun State, the dreadful Yoruba ethnic militia group, OPC, using the traditional *Oro* deity, allegedly killed seven Fulani pastoralists in a premeditated attack (Bamgbose, 2002: 19). The Fulani were accused of armed banditry, raping and harassing women.

Saki Town

Saki is the northernmost Yoruba town. According to the 2006 census, the population of Saki (the headquarter of Saki West local government) was 388,225. Large-scale farms in Saki include: Oyagbola Farms; Nasco Farms; Tela Farms; Apalara Farms; and Togun Farms.¹⁴ There existed commercial transactions between the Yoruba host community and the Fulani pastoralists.¹⁵ Fulani women trade their cheese and cow milk on market days. Abundant evidence in Saki amplifies the fact that there was peaceful co-existence between the sedentary Fulani and the Yoruba hosts. Indeed, the Fulani *ardo* was a stakeholder in the conflict resolutions and peace meetings between April 1998 and June 2000 to end the uprisings between Yoruba farmers and the Bororo pastoralists (Adeyanju, 2000: 21). Ironically too, the Bororo Fulani had on many instances attacked the settled Fulani and stole their cattle (Raheem Oyedele Muslim, 2000: 21). According to Alhaji Raheem Oyedele Muslim, a local government chairman:

We have the town Fulani who have been with us since time immemorial. They are not any problem. They have even gotten married to Yoruba women. They have even had children. They are living with us in town and we are even intermarrying with them too. But these Bororos are a nomadic set of Fulani who come to the village; they do not have abodes there. They even hate town Fulanis; they kill them and they join their own cows with theirs. (Raheem Oyedele Muslim, 2000: 22)

Since 1992 violent clashes have occurred between the Bororo Fulani pastoralists and Yoruba farmers: over 72 Yoruba farmers were killed. For example, on 15 October 2000 the Bororo Fulani launched an unprovoked nocturnal attack on the farming settlement of Igbo-Osa in Saki (Adeyanju, 2000: 21). Many Yoruba sustained injuries from gunshots. The Bororo Fulani set ablaze barns full of yam, locust beans, Shea butter and corn. In the past the people of Igbo-Osa had suffered persistent harassment from the Bororo Fulani for upwards of three to five months. They disappeared for a period of time only to return to cause havoc that attracted both media and national attention (Adeyanju, 2000: 21).

In Saki, the conflicts escalated due to political motivation and ethnicity. It was alleged that the Fulani in Saki were very rich and created an organization that had powerful influences both in government and the police.¹⁶ Bororo Fulani often evade justice whenever farmers demand compensation on damaged farms. It was further alleged that the Bororo Fulani denigrate Yoruba culture and language. This complicates the negotiation process. Bororo Fulani were considered very aggressive and always fully armed with AK-47s, charms and cutlasses. Many farmers were killed due to the clashes over damaged crops or farmland rather than being compensated. According to a source, 'they prefer the life of cattle to that of any human being'. It was alleged that even among themselves they detest close relationships.¹⁷ They constituted a security risk by engaging in armed robbery and raping women.

In some cases, cattle caused havoc on the farms without the knowledge of the Bororo Fulani. The Bororo Fulani engaged the services of their youths between the ages of 15 and 25 years to graze the animals in order to learn the trade and also acquire their own cattle. Farmers too, in some cases, often sent their youths to the farms and when they observe that cattle destroyed the farms, they sought revenge by seizing or killing the cattle if the Bororo Fulani refused to compensate. In some instances, compensation *was* paid after the extent of damage was valued by a committee including the Fulani *Ardo*, community leaders and the police.

In 1994 a Bororo Fulani entered a farm with his cattle and destroyed crops. Since then, conflicts persistently occurred between the Yoruba farmers and the Bororo Fulani.¹⁸ The crises were further heightened by the 'peace brokers' who made profit out of the negotiation process by exploiting

both the farmers and the Bororo Fulani. They wittingly perverted justice and forestalled the prospects of consensus-building between the warring parties:

We all know how conflict acts [sic] in a community. There are some who are gravely hurt by that conflict; there are others who see it as a means to promote their own gain, who benefit from the conflict. This was the original case in Saki. Those who were to mediate in the conflicts between the Fulanis and the Saki inhabitants became those who found out they could benefit by demanding certain compensation, and then keeping most of it for themselves. They cheated the farmer by taking what was rightly his; they cheated the Fulani because they took what he meant for a different purpose; but most of all, they cheated the whole community because they destroyed the possibility of trust and goodwill among the people.¹⁹

Between 1998 and 2000 properties and lives were lost over grazing rights and the destruction of farmland in Saki. Conflicts in Saki reached a peak in the persistent conflicts when the Bororo Fulani pastoralists were banished from Saki in 2000. In Saki, the economy became further strangled and commercial transactions diminished. In the wake of the crisis, the *Kara* market was closed down, apparently because some Yoruba traders wanted the control of the market dominated by Hausa and Fulani cattle traders. In the past, the cattle ranch (the *Kara*) was shifted from Abeokuta, Oyo, Iseyin and Saki due to conflicts and competition. For many years, some Yoruba towns depended on Saki cattle markets. On Saturdays and week days, cattle from Saki were slaughtered to serve party-goers in Yoruba towns. The conflicts that affected Saki cattle markets had a significant impact on marriage and funeral ceremonies farther afield – completely outside the conflict zone. Yoruba farmer–Fulani pastoralist conflicts had repercussions beyond Oyo State, and forced a re-evaluation of the relations among Kwara, Oyo and Ogun states.

For security and commercial reasons, the *Kara* was relocated to Ilesha Baruba in Baruten local government of Kwara State. The Bariba people of Ilesha-Baruba accepted the Bororo Fulani who requested refuge in their midst.²⁰ Ilesha-Baruba has the Tunja grazing reserve which is managed by both the federal government and Kwara State government. The area was considered safe by the Bororo Fulani for their grazing and cattle trade.

In order to secure their monopoly of the cattle trade, Bororo Fulani in Ilesha Baruba mounted roadblocks in order to prevent the members of the United Association of Saki Cow Merchants from buying cows in any other place except at the *Kara*. Several lorry loads of cattle and other livestock bought and paid for by members of the association were forcibly hijacked and diverted to the *Kara* by the Bororo Fulani, with Saki cattle dealers incurring substantial financial losses (Adeyanju, 2000: 21). This dimension of competition over the cattle market spurred communal hostility between Saki and Ilesha Baruba in the Baruten local government where Bororo Fulani sought refuge and established a new cattle market.

Earlier on 23 March 1999 a peace meeting was held in Saki attended by the chairmen of the Saki West local government and Baruten local government, community leaders and other stakeholders. It was agreed that hijacking of livestock would be stopped and livestock diverted to the *Kara* would be released. It was also concluded that Saki cow dealers would be permitted to trade freely without been restricted to the *Kara* or anywhere. On a larger scale, the peace meeting resolved to set up a conflict resolution association comprising of Yoruba farmers and Fulani pastoralists at the district, local government and state levels to resolve disputes before degenerating into large-scale conflicts. But the initiative was not effective and was unable to control subsequent violent clashes (Adeyanju, 2000: 21).

Another meeting followed on 9 April 1999 attended by cattle dealers, butchers, community leaders, representatives of traditional rulers, police, road transport workers unions, Bororo Fulani and officials from both Saki and Baruten local governments. The peace meeting produced a

communiqué signed by the chairmen of the two local governments which, amongst other issues, resolved to end all frictions in the interest of commerce and peaceful cohabitation.

On 15 July 1999 a peace meeting was held at Kosubosu, headquarters of the Baruten local government. This was followed by another peace-building meeting personally convened by the Okere of Saki, Oba Oyedokun II in his palace at which the Ilesha-Bariba community was criticized for prolonging the dispute due to its agenda to secure a monopoly of the cattle market for its new ranch. The Saki community set up a standing peace and security committee with the objective of resolving conflicts. The committee comprised of the chairman of the local government and his deputy, the representative of the Oba, the police divisional officer, the chairman of the Farmers' Association, the Seriki Fulani community and the director of agriculture in the local government. The committee met after the Fulani attack on Igbo-Osa and the team of Criminal Investigation Bureau (CIB) from Ibadan visited the settlement on 17 October 2000.

The mode of compensation for the losses incurred during the conflicts became contentious. While the farmers of Saki made no demand for compensation despite the loss of lives, barns of foodstuffs, and farmlands as well as homes, the government of Kwara State wrote to the Baruten local government chairman on 3 November 1999 urging him to recover the property of the Bororo Fulani who abandoned their cattle ranch in Saki. The demand was profoundly rejected by the people of Saki who argued that they incurred losses that exceeded that of the Bororo Fulani. The deputy governors of Kwara and Oyo states met to discuss the compensation matter. However, there was growing tension between 1999 and 2000 in the communities in the Saki area and along the Oyo/Kwara border.

The people of Saki demanded that Ilesha-Baruba should expel the Bororo Fulani from their community.²¹ The people of Ilesha-Baruba argued that the Fulani relocated to their town by their own volition and, going by their history, they could move the cattle market from there again.²² The cattle trade boosted the economy of Ilesha-Baruba through collection of taxes at the new cattle ranch, the *Kara*.²³ Indeed, the *Kara* that had existed in Ilesha-Baruba before the arrival of the Bororo Fulani was expanded and experienced increased business. During the period, the Saki cow dealers and the supporters threatened to invade Ilesha-Baruba. The traditional ruler of Saki, Oba Oyedokun II and the local government chairman placated them. In the same period, canards spread in Saki that the Bariba people in Baruten had procured fire arms to be used by the Bororo Fulani to invade Saki and other Yoruba-speaking areas across the state border. Meanwhile, the tour of the Baruten local government by the Kwara State Commissioner for Agriculture ended the planned attacks from both sides.

Language barriers deepened the communication gap between the Yoruba farmers and Bororo Fulani pastoralists. In one instance, the Saki West local government mobilized some of its staff who spoke Hausa and Fulfude to the potential flashpoints at Okerete, Orita, Idera, Sanni-Sala, Wasangere, Ekokan and Boodilu to pacify the Yoruba farmers and Bororo Fulani pastoralists (Raheem Oyedele Muslim, 2000: 22).

Northern elite of the Arewa Consultative Forum empowered a high-profile committee to investigate charges of harassment of the Fulani herders in Oke-Ogun and the alleged veiled support of Oyo State government to the Yoruba farmers. On 13 October 2000 General Muhammadu Buhari led other members of the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) to see the governor of Oyo State, Alhaji Lam Adesina. Buhari lodged the complaint that 68 Bororo Fulani were killed in Saki.²⁴ But 24 hours after the former head of state left, the Bororo Fulani attacked the Igbo-Osa farm settlement unprovoked. The settlement was sacked with barns of foodstuff being destroyed and many people maimed.

There was no OPC in Saki but vigilante groups that provide security in the communities. Since 1970 farmers have established various organizations to protect themselves from being cheated by

Bororo Fulani whenever they refused to pay compensation for damaged crops. These associations include: The Farmers Congress; Oyo State Farmers Association (OSFA); Practicing Farmers Association of Nigeria (PFAN); Federation of Farmers Association of Nigeria (FOFAN); and All Nigerian Farmers Association of Nigeria. Both the state and federal governments set up some of these associations. They often changed their names in accordance with changes in government. Some of the associations have been politicized. Unlike the *Agbekoya* (farmers reject oppression) formed in the late 1960s to resist taxation, the new associations served as political arms of government in power rather than protect the interest of farmers.

Beyond conflicts over grazing and farmlands, a group of Bororo Fulani who abandoned their pastoral trade constituted themselves into armed bands along the international border that linked Saki with the Republic of Benin. In one instance on 19 September 1998, Bororo Fulani armed bandits struck at a spot between Orita and Okerete villages. Two of the Bororo Fulani armed bandits were apprehended by the villagers who handed them over to the police. The criminal tendencies of some of the Bororo Fulani put them at loggerheads with both the Yoruba hosts and the sedentary Fulani who were victims of their menace.

In March 2004 Yoruba farmers and the Bororo Fulani a peace communiqué. The communiqué contained the following.²⁵

1. The community will henceforth live in peace, with property and lives protected.
2. Free movement of the people.
3. The Fulani are free to graze their cattle, and in return, the cattle market would be opened.
4. Leaders of the various communities are responsible to see that their own communities carry out this agreement, and in order to facilitate this, there would be identity cards for all in the area.
5. Disagreement should be settled amicably.
6. If there is difficulty that is beyond the ability of the local leaders to resolve, it was agreed that no one from among the people of the contending parties would contribute to the conflict, but that all will see to it that the dispute is brought before the law in order to reach a peace agreement without violence.
7. No one is allowed to take law into his hands.
8. The cattle market should be expanded to include vegetables and grain market in order to enhance the economic viability of the area and provide for a more stable future.
9. Cooperative societies should be set up to enable each person to prosper to the extent of his ability.

On 17 April 2004 the Saki cattle and vegetable market was reopened during the stakeholders' reconciliation meeting. It was attended by the traditional authorities, community leaders, Bororo Fulani, police and officials of the local government. The new cattle market at Ilesha-Baruba continued to exist. Subsequently, cattle and other livestock were transacted between Saki and Ilesha-Baruba.

Beyond the peace initiatives of traditional authorities, police and community-based organizations, the internecine conflicts between farmers and Bororo Fulani herders attracted the intervention of international NGOs. Following the October 2000 conflicts, USAID/OTI set up a pilot programme on conflict prevention and mitigation for the Fulani and Yoruba in the Oke-Ogun communities of Oyo State.

An inter-ethnic peace committee of 20 members was formed. Members comprised of traditional rulers, police and the state security service. The committee met monthly and the local governments in the area planned to continue funding it in order to ensure it was institutionalized. Several peace

interventions inadvertently reduced violent clashes and strengthened peaceful cohabitation between Yoruba farmers and Bororo Fulani pastoralists.

Conclusion

Conflict between farmers and pastoralists was a by-product of a disarticulated production base and the mono-cultural structure of the economy. Multipurpose rural development programmes were diminished as there were no linkages between the sectors of the economy. There was rural neglect and, indeed, distorted planning for the agricultural sector. Illegal mining activities led to land hunger and insecurity for agricultural production. Farmers and pastoralists competed over shrinking resources, which triggered other underlying grievances of ethnicity. It also flared up historical hostilities, which have been manipulated by the elite.

Both the traditional authority and local governments strove to protect the Fulani pastoralists and intervened in the brewing conflicts. Peace initiatives were formed at the insistence of the traditional authority. In some parts of Oke-Ogun, there was a standing agreement between the Yoruba and Fulani. In Eruwa town, the Fulani lived peacefully with Yoruba for hundreds of years and there was intermarriage. The Oba of Eruwa, His Royal Highness, Samuel Adebayo Adegbola had collected compensation from Yoruba drivers to Fulani herders whose cattle were crushed to death by vehicles. In the same manner, he had collected compensation from Fulani cattle herders for Yoruba farmers whose farmlands were destroyed by cattle. In one instance, a Fulani herder paid the sum of N30,000.00 (US\$200) to a Yoruba farmer whose farmland was ravaged by cattle (Oguntayo, 2005: 16). Peace moves were strengthened by international NGOs such as USAID/OTI.

Even though greater conflict management and resolution initiatives were launched the structural problems are still unresolved. The migration of Bororo Fulani has continued to increase due to the desertification process. Grazing facilities are shrinking and there is appalling social infrastructure in the rural areas. The land tenure system led to fragmentation and inadequate opportunity to develop sustainable policy for grazing reserves. There is a need to develop participatory modes of decision making on the use and management of natural resources between different economic groups, especially farmers and pastoralists.

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Notes

1. Interview with Alhaji Umar Jiga, Fulani *Ardo* (Bororo), Iseyin, 67 years old, 20 April 2004.
2. His Royal Highness Oba Ganiyu Adebayo Alobalowo II, the Aseyin of Iseyin, 60 years old, interviewed at the palace 19 April 2004.
3. Interview with Mr RA Akanji, Director for Agriculture, Iseyin local government, interviewed 14 April 2004.
4. Interview with Alhaji Umar Jiga, Fulani *Ardo* (Bororo), Iseyin, 67 years old, 20 April 2004.
5. Interview with Alhaji Umar Jiga, Fulani *Ardo* (Bororo), Iseyin, 67 years old, 20 April 2004.
6. Interview with Alhaji Umar Jiga, Fulani *Ardo* (Bororo), Iseyin, 67 years old, 20 April 2004.
7. Interview with Alhaji Umar Jiga, Fulani *Ardo* (Bororo), Iseyin, 67 years old, 20 April 2004.
8. Interview with Alhaji Umar Jiga, Fulani *Ardo* (Bororo), Iseyin, 67 years old, 20 April 2004.
9. Chief Samson Oladimeji Siyanbola, the Jagun Koso of Iseyin, a judge of the Customary Court of Iseyin, Chairman of Police Community Relations Community, Iseyin, 63 years old, at Koso area, Iseyin, 16 April 2004.

10. RA Akanji, Director for Agriculture, Iseyin local government interviewed 14 April 2004.
11. His Royal Highness Oba Ganiyu Adebayo Alobalowo II, the Aseyin of Iseyin, 60 years old, interviewed at the palace 19 April 2004.
12. Interview with Alhaji Umar Jiga, Sarkin Fulani (Bororo), Iseyin, 67 years old, 20 April 2004.
13. RA Akanji, Director for Agriculture, Iseyin local government interviewed 14 April 2004. In Benue State, raping spurred conflicts between farmers and Bororo Fulani. The clash occurred following the death of a 10-year-old Tiv girl who was allegedly raped and poisoned by the Fulani pastoralists (see Bur 2005: 19; Nwakaudu, 2005: 5).
14. Interview with Mr Akanji, former Director of Agriculture, Saki West local government, 23 April 2005.
15. Interview with Alhaji Sulaiman Yakub, Oyo State Chairman of Bororo Fulani, Saki, 50 years, 24 April 2004.
16. Alhaji Ibrahim Oyagbola, 56, farmer, 25 April 2004.
17. Alhaji Ibrahim Oyagbola, 56, farmer, 25 April 2004.
18. Muhammad Ibrahim Gashash, President, National Tranquillity Movement (NTM) at the reopening of the Saki cattle market and commemoration of stakeholders reconciliation, new Saki cattle and vegetable market, Saki, 17 April 2004.
19. Speech presented by Muhammad Ibrahim Gashash, President, National Tranquillity Movement (NTM) at the reopening of the Saki cattle market and commemoration of stakeholders reconciliation, new Saki cattle and vegetable market, Saki, 17 April 2004, p. 2.
20. Hajia Akimat Abubakar (Mrs), 50, nurse and wife of the Emir of Ilesha-Baruba, 25 April 2004.
21. Hajia Akimat Abubakar, 50, nurse and wife of the Emir of Ilesha-Baruba, 25 April 2004.
22. Engineer Bio Uthman Abubakar, Emir of Baruba, The Sabe Berekereku III of Ilesha Baruba, former Commissioner for Works Kwara State and former representative of National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), London, 70, 25 April 2004.
23. Engineer Bio Uthman Abubakar, Emir of Baruba.
24. The military administration of General Muhammadu Buhari was accused of not paying compensation to Fulani who lost thousands of cattle during the 1983 rinderpest epidemic. However, the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) and the Pastoralists Resolve (PARE) headed by General Buhari improved the welfare of Fulani cattle-rearers. PARE, an NGO, has recorded achievements in the areas of conflict resolution, education, extension services and public enlightenment for the Fulani pastoralists.
25. Speech presented by Muhammad Ibrahim Gashash, President, National Tranquillity Movement (NTM) at the reopening of the Saki cattle market and commemoration of stakeholders reconciliation, new Saki cattle and vegetable market, Saki, 17 April 2004, p. 3.

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